

Montecito/Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan

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Montecito/Happy Valley Neighborhood
Adopted by City Council March 18, 1996

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San Rafael High School for use of their facilities at many meetings
San Rafael High School 1994 art class for Neighborhood Plan poster art work

Aldersly Retirement Community and Salvation Army for use of their facilities

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Thanks to the many Community participants whose attendance and involvement in one or more meetings helped create the Montecito/Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan.

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March 18, 1996

City of San Rafael, California

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*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens
can change the world.*

Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

Executive Summary

In April 1995, the Montecito/Happy Valley neighborhood embarked on a planning process resulting in the guiding principles, policies and programs described in this Plan. Over the summer, neighborhood participants defined the issues, debated solutions and wrote the work you are holding.

Nestled in two valleys north of the San Rafael Canal and east of Downtown, Montecito/Happy Valley offers a wide variety of housing, businesses and community services. There are many strong features about our neighborhood: its beautiful natural setting; the diversity of uses including elegant historic homes; and its convenient location to retail shops and service providers. Schools, jobs and transit are all within walking distance.

Some of the challenges facing the neighborhood in the 1990s are stabilizing the existing pleasing mix of uses, adding and improving places for people to get together; improving the appearance of the neighborhood, improving some of the basic infrastructure such as safe pedestrian rights-of-way, and building a stronger sense of community and identity.

We as residents and neighbors lobbied hard for this plan to address these concerns. We have spent many hours identifying issues, opportunities, and actions. We have come up with a variety of City and neighborhood actions which we believe will strengthen and improve our neighborhood in the future.

We propose that neighborhood land uses be kept much as they are. The neighborhood already has a varied mix, and our streets are narrow and crowded. We recommend zoning changes which keep the existing balance of uses. We would like to have neighborhood design guidelines, improved code enforcement, and many neighborhood actions to improve the appearance of our area — from neighborhood cleanup days to adding street trees.

We're interested in improving and adding neighborhood recreation opportunities. After a great deal of debate, we've agreed to a Redevelopment Agency-sponsored senior housing proposal on the Union Street bus yard site. We're assured that the development would include a meeting room for us to use with residents of the project and an outdoor area to be used jointly by residents of the Agency project, the Head Start program and the neighborhood. We want to see this become a neighborhood gathering area and focal point.

Safety, traffic and parking are issues of high priority in Montecito/Happy Valley. We have identified many needed infrastructure improvements, such as added sidewalks, improved pedestrian crossings, street lighting and a range of possible traffic improvements to make our streets safer and less auto-dominated. Neighborhood Watch and Disaster Planning also rank highly on our list of neighborhood actions.

One of the most exciting aspects of this process for us has been the realization that a strong neighborhood association is key to making things happen. We are taking steps to revitalize and expand our neighborhood organization — including the Neighborhood Forum on September 16, 1995 where we learned about other organizations' successes. You will continue to hear from us!

Introduction

What is a Neighborhood Plan and how does it fit into the San Rafael's General Plan?

State law requires all cities and counties to prepare General Plans which set out their goals, policies, standards and actions for the future. The Plan describes how the city will address land use, circulation, recreation and the environment. Other concerns, especially those related to development, may also be included. It is essential that the General Plan is an integrated, internally consistent document.

Within the context of overall city policies, Neighborhood Plans provide more direction on issues important to each neighborhood. Just as important, neighborhood planning efforts are an opportunity for residents and local business owners to get to know each other and organize neighborhood actions.

The Montecito/Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan refines neighborhood land uses, and addresses beautification and design, traffic, parking, safety and the importance of a strong neighborhood organization. It includes a land use map which is the basis for residential rezonings, design guidelines, and many recommended improvements, such as sidewalks on some streets and street trees. Some of these improvements may be financed over time out of City funds; others need to be paid for by neighborhood residents. A proposal for a Neighborhood Improvement Assessment District has received strong support at an August 16th poll.

Neighborhood Plan Process

The City recognized that better direction is needed to describe Montecito's future, and San Rafael's General Plan promised a neighborhood plan would be prepared. Because of this and ongoing neighborhood efforts, work on the plan started in January 1995.

A small group of neighborhood leaders (the "Ad Hoc Steering Committee") met with staff to decide on the process to be used for the plan. There was agreement the planning process should:

- be short term and action oriented
- maximize neighborhood involvement, and
- be neighborhood directed.

The planning effort was set up to be inclusive of all who wanted to participate and was developed by neighborhood participants, with staff providing a support and information role.

There was extensive outreach and community involvement in identifying the Plan's overall Vision and issues. Followup task groups then focused on specific topics and proposed solutions. Neighborhood residents, as well as the City, have important parts in implementing this Plan.

Timeline

Feb. - March	The Neighborhood Ad Hoc Steering Committee decided on the process to be used, boundaries for the plan area, and the neighborhood's name. They
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identified ways to encourage resident and business involvement and actively assisted with neighborhood meeting notification. Robyn Anderson of MIG, Berkeley, was hired to facilitate workshop meetings. A city staff Resource Team was also set up to coordinate the City's effort and to be available as resource persons at meetings.

April 29 Over 75 people attended the "kick off" workshop at Aldersly. Those present developed a Vision for the neighborhood, and identified their likes (Figure 1), dislikes (Figure 2), and some possible actions.

May 24 *Beautification, Community and Safety*
All participants identified Guiding Principles, specific issues and opportunities related to these topics.

June 14 *Beautification, Community and Safety*
Staff provided Fact Sheets responding to issues raised on May 24. Participants divided into three self-selected groups to develop and start to rank actions addressing prior issues. Three Coordinating Committee Members were appointed to put together the draft Plan in September and October.

July 5 *Land Use, Traffic and Parking*
All participants identified Guiding Principles, issues and opportunities related to these topics.

July 26 *Land Use, Traffic and Parking*
Fact Sheets responded to the land

Likes

- ◆ Beautiful natural setting with views of hills and Mt. Tamalpais
- ◆ Older, established neighborhood with narrow streets, large shade trees and many historic and charming homes
- ◆ Convenient location to shops, Dominican College, San Rafael High School, Downtown, Highway 101 and the Transportation Center
- ◆ Friendly community with mix of students, seniors and families representing many ethnic and economic backgrounds
- ◆ Mix of uses with a variety of housing opportunities, close-by recreation and services
- ◆ Good police and fire services
- ◆ Favorite neighborhood places included the high school, the San Rafael Canal walkway and surrounding hill paths.

Figure 1. Likes from April 29 Workshop

use, traffic and parking issues raised. Participants divided into two self-selected groups to develop actions addressing these issues. Two Coordinating Committee Members were appointed to put together the draft Plan in September and October.

July - August Those who signed up on July 5 spent several meetings reviewing future use options for the school district's surplus bus yard property on Union Street. An additional August 9 meeting involving 26 participants resulted in agreement for a 40-unit affordable senior project with specified amenities sponsored by the Redevelopment Agency.

Aug. 16 At this widely-noticed "Ballot" meeting, participants discussed and agreed with the city policy actions and approaches identified at previous meetings; provided

Dislikes

- ◆ Lack of neighborhood gathering places
- ◆ Speeding cars
- ◆ Dangerous intersections
- ◆ High school drop off congestion
- ◆ Lack of parking at the High School
- ◆ Need for infrastructure improvements including sidewalks, curbs and gutters, lighting and drainage
- ◆ Poorly maintained landscaping and buildings
- ◆ Graffiti and litter
- ◆ Lack of enforcement of traffic, parking and housing codes
- ◆ Too crowded
- ◆ Density too high
- ◆ Poor building design of some buildings
- ◆ Noise from sirens and high school loudspeakers.

Sept. - Coordinating Committee members, with staff assistance, developed the draft Plan from the plan participants' Vision Statement, Guiding Principles, Actions, and background information.

Oct. 25 Final Neighborhood Plan meeting to present, review and celebrate completion of our draft Plan.

Neighborhood History

The area known as Montecito/Happy Valley is one of San Rafael's oldest neighborhoods. It is nestled within two valleys, located east of Irwin Creek, and north of the San Rafael Canal. Originally, much of the lowlands were marshlands, close to the edge of the San Pedro hills (see Figure 3).

An early map of San Rafael identifies Montecito as part of the "Irwin Tract." One of the streets is named after the Jewell family,

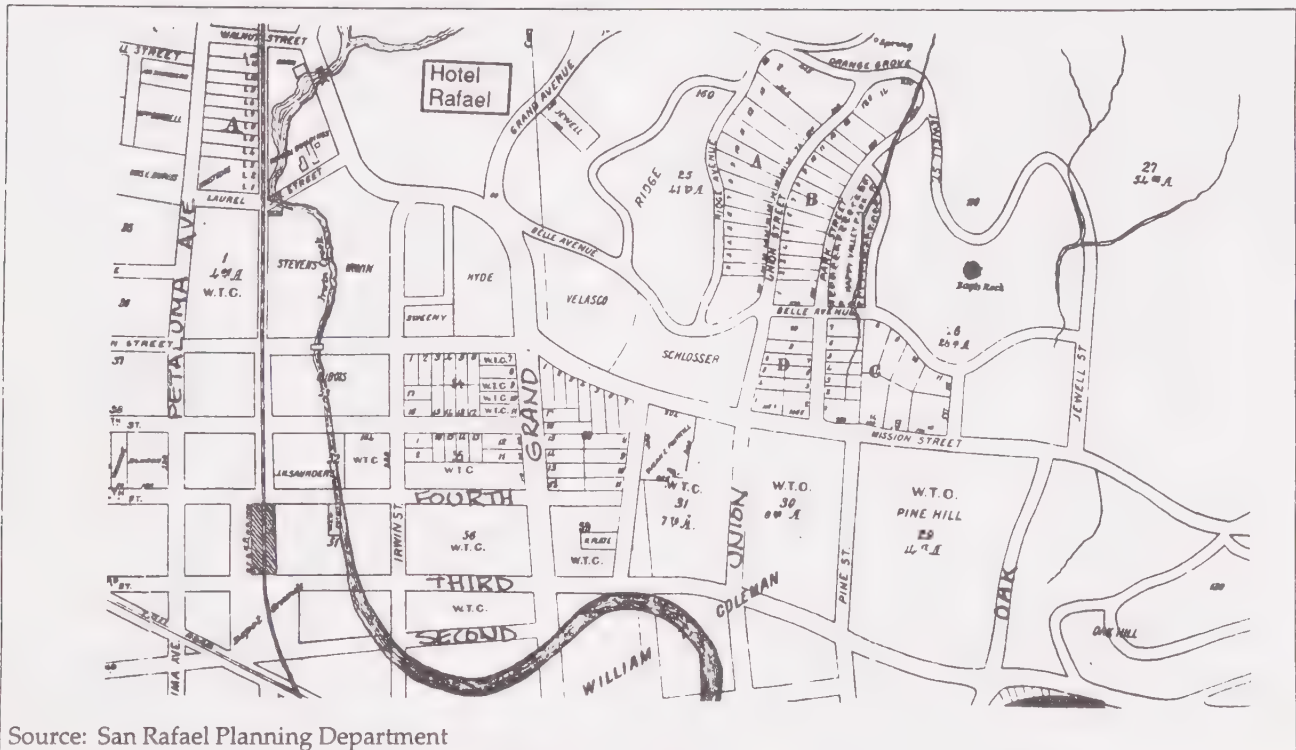
Figure 2. Dislikes from April 29 Workshop

preferences for "wish list" traffic improvements, and ranked city capital improvements and neighborhood association actions which can be undertaken.



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 3. Extent of Historic Baylands



Source: San Rafael Planning Department

Figure 4. First recorded map of the Happy Valley subdivision, 1888

a prominent early San Rafael family. Oliver Irwin was an extensive landowner and one of the founders of Hotel Rafael, a luxury hotel built in 1886 on a hill bounded by Belle and Grand. [The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1928.]

In 1871, Irwin sold his land in Montecito to San Rafael's first developer William T. Coleman for \$84,000. By 1888, Coleman had subdivided the land into the Happy Valley subdivision (see Figure 4). By 1910, the neighborhood officially marked the eastern city limit line of San Rafael.

Located in two valleys bordered by Jewell Street and Ridge Avenue, the neighborhood enjoyed an excellent climate and a view of Mt. Tamalpais. By 1915, the lots were laid out in the pattern that exists today. Large homes were built on Grand and Mission Avenues, many of which are today historic and architecturally significant.

The Aldersly (then Danish) Retirement Home was built in 1921 and, in 1923, the San Rafael Board of Education purchased

from the San Rafael Development Company a 29-acre site known as Eagle Rock to build San Rafael High School. Water covered much of the lowlands, an area the locals dubbed "Happy Valley Lake." The new high school opened in 1925 (see Figure 5). Aldersly and the high school continue today as important community institutions.

By 1950 most of the residential area of the neighborhood north of Fourth Street was developed with single-family homes. There were a few industries in the vicinity including the Coca Cola bottling plant at Second and Irwin, and the Roberts Dairy where Salvation Army and San Rafael Commons are today. Recreational amenities included the Municipal Yacht Harbor at the end of Mary Street, the "East Side Ball Field" where United Market is today, and a bowling alley at the northwest corner of Third and Grand. The Marin County Humane Society was located at the northeast corner of Third and Grand, and the American Legion was in the building where Pardini operates a market today.

In the 1950s the yacht harbor was filled in for the Montecito Shopping Center. San Rafael's first zoning ordinance was adopted in 1952. Most of the Happy Valley area was zoned for apartments. Many small- to medium-size apartments were built throughout the neighborhood from the late 1950s to the 1970s. Fire Station #2 was built in 1957, and Head Start established its second oldest facility in Marin County in 1970.

Since 1980, apart from the senior housing at San Rafael Commons, only 28 new homes were constructed in the Montecito/Happy Valley. Most of the area is built out, with only a couple of vacant lots. There have been numerous upgrades, including a late 1980s remodel of the Montecito Shopping Center with a new front facade and a walkway along the San Rafael Canal. In 1995, there is a sense of improvement in the

neighborhood as several homes and businesses are renovating.

Major Neighborhood Characteristics

Montecito/Happy Valley is a unique and complete neighborhood. Located in two valleys north of the San Rafael Canal, the area offers a wide variety of housing, business opportunities and community services. As an older neighborhood, it has few vacant lots, several large historic homes, cottages, duplexes and diverse apartments. In many ways, including its location close to the center of the city and transit, Montecito/Happy Valley has characteristics of the new mixed-use medium density communities being built today as an alternative to auto-oriented suburbs.



Figure 5. San Rafael High School administrative building, a Montecito/Happy Valley landmark since 1925

Population

In 1990, there were 1,940 people living in Montecito/Happy Valley, comprising four percent of the total population of San Rafael. This compares with the 1980 population of 1,615. The increase in residents was due in part to an increase in the number of housing units, especially the addition of the 83 senior units San Rafael Commons, and in part due to an increase in persons per household.

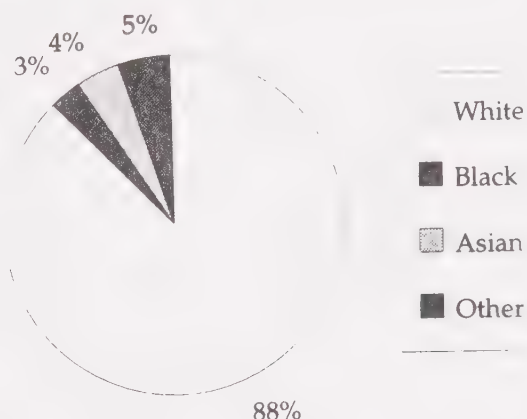
Race

For the most part, residents were white, and the racial composition in the neighborhood was very similar to San Rafael overall. The biggest change in San Rafael and the neighborhood since 1980 was in the number of people who are Hispanic. People of Hispanic heritage may be of any race. The percentage of Hispanics increased from 1980 to 1990 from five to fifteen percent.

Age

Compared with San Rafael, Montecito/Happy Valley had a relatively large number of older residents (see Figure 7). The

Racial Composition in Montecito/Happy Valley, 1990



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 6. Racial Composition in 1990

neighborhood has three senior residential facilities: San Rafael Commons, Aldersly Retirement Community and San Rafael Senior Home. In 1990, 95 people were over 85 years old. As of 1995, the oldest living documented man at age 115 lived at Aldersly. In 1990, there were 268 children under age 15 in the neighborhood (14 percent compared with 15 percent city-wide).

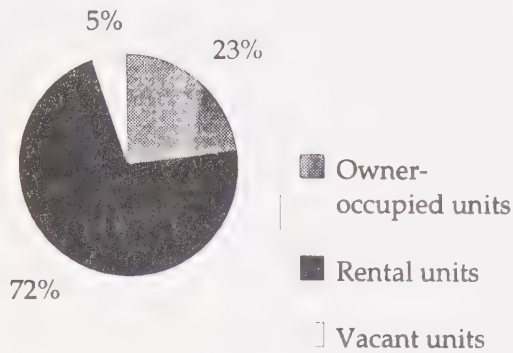
1990 Age Distribution in Montecito and San Rafael



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 7. Age Distribution in 1990

Montecito Housing, 1990



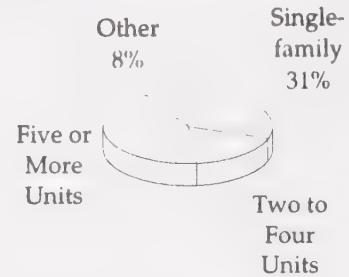
Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 8. Montecito Housing, 1990

Housing

In 1990, there were 1,045 housing units in the neighborhood. As shown in Figures 8 and 9, although no one type of housing

Housing Mix



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

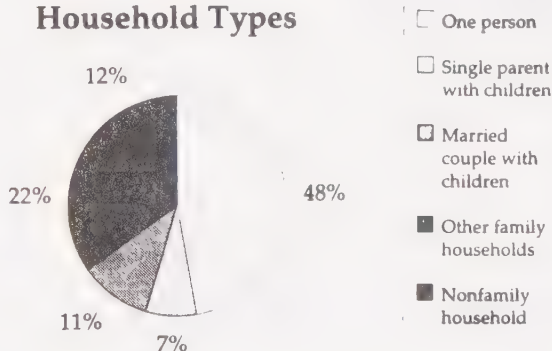
Figure 9. Housing Mix, Montecito/Happy Valley, 1990

dominated the neighborhood, there were a large number of rental units. Many of the dwelling units were in apartment buildings built since the mid-1950s.

Not surprisingly, household types were varied (see Figures 10 and 11). Nearly half of the residents lived alone, over 25 percent of the residents live in a household headed by a married couple, and about 17 percent were shared households.

Overall, six percent of neighborhood residents lived in a unit where there was more than one person per room (see Figure 12), the demographic standard used in the

Household Types



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 10. Household Types in Montecito, 1990

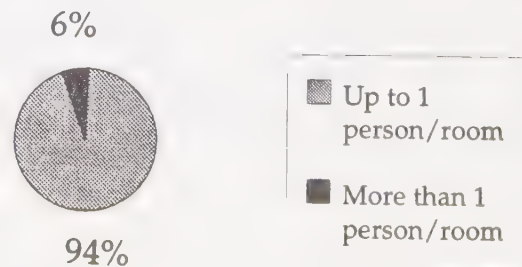
Household Size



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 11. Household Size, Montecito/Happy Valley, 1990

Number of People Per Room in Montecito, 1990



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 12. Number of People Per Room, 1990

Census to define “overcrowding”. This compared to 6.1 percent for the entire City.

The average gross area density of the residential area is about 12 units per acre, with an average of 1.86 people per unit. This is within San Rafael’s medium density range of 6.5 to 15 units per acre. Density ranges from four units per acre along Jewell Street to 62 units per acre at the affordable San Rafael Commons senior housing project.

The Business Community

Montecito is a convenient commercial location, adjacent to Highway 101 and along Second, Third and Fourth Streets connecting to Downtown San Rafael. There are more than 400 diverse businesses in the Montecito/Happy Valley neighborhood, including an estimated 31 home-based businesses.

The neighborhood’s commercial anchor is Montecito Shopping Center, one of San Rafael’s larger centers. It is noted for Trader Joe’s, good restaurants, and a canal-front walkway. The shopping center was remodelled in the late 1980s. There are two community supermarkets on Third Street: United and Pardini’s. Along Irwin Street, a gateway to San Rafael, several large office buildings offer businesses a high profile to commuters on Highway 101. Fourth Street provides a commercial link to Downtown with a wide range of office, service and retail uses. In addition, many social service agencies, such as Salvation Army, Marin County’s Health Department and Head Start make their home in Montecito because of the easy accessibility to the rest of San Rafael.

Our Vision of Montecito/Happy Valley Neighborhood

*In the year 2010, our distinct neighborhood is
a beautiful and desirable place with
a diversity of architecture and a variety of uses
within easy walking distance.*

*There are central gathering places
where people meet each other to visit and hold events.
Our pleasant, tree shaded, narrow streets are safe
to walk and drive along and we see fewer cars.*

*We are a community which works together
to keep our neighborhood secure, clean and attractive,
and to celebrate our diversity.*



Land Use

Introduction

The General Plan establishes land use designations. Zoning must be consistent with those designations. Because zoning districts are more refined, there may be two or more zoning districts that fit within one land use category.

In 1950 most of the neighborhood was developed with single-family homes. However, 1951 zoning established high density zoning for a large portion of the neighborhood, and many lots were then developed with apartments (see figures 13 and 14). The high density zoning and General Plan land use has remained in effect since that time. The 1988 General Plan recognized the need for this Neighborhood Plan to evaluate and more specifically determine the type and intensity of future uses.

There is a strong consensus among our plan participants that future residential land use and zoning should stabilize and protect our existing mix of uses and minimize additional development. At the same time we have to consider and balance property owner's and neighbor's rights. We're proposing land use changes to accomplish these goals. Neighborhood streets are narrow and crowded, and there is already a varied mix of housing types with a growing preponderance of apartments. In addition, the current zoning maximums are usually unrealistically high given that many lots are relatively small, narrow, and/or sloping, and given newer parking, height and other zoning standards as well as neighborhood design considerations.

There is general satisfaction with the mix of retail, service, office and other uses in our commercial areas. No land use or zoning changes are proposed for these areas.

We believe neighborhood recreation opportunities and gathering areas are important focal points in any neighborhood. To address this issue, we explored the possibility of purchasing and developing a neighborhood park on a 1.8 acre surplus school district site on Union Street, but concluded costs would be too high. There are no City funds for new parks in developed neighborhoods. Regretfully, the City has even had to turn down grants to improve long-planned parks due to a lack of funds for ongoing added maintenance. New funding sources, such as a neighborhood assessment district, would be needed for such a park, and costs for the District's site are high, involving not only purchase, but relocation of the existing District bus and maintenance yard use.

After several meetings to discuss land use options for the district's site, we agreed that a Redevelopment Agency-sponsored senior housing project which includes an outdoor area and meeting room would provide the "most bang for the buck." The meeting room would be made available to us and project residents, and an outdoor area would be designed to be used jointly by project residents, Head Start and the neighborhood. This proposal helps meet neighborhood goals for a new outdoor gathering place and improving the appearance of Union Street, while minimizing adverse impacts to the neighborhood. We can also pursue grant funds to add recreation facilities to this common area, as well as to an area north of the High School gym.

We also learned about the many Citywide recreation programs open to the public at San Rafael High School, which is one of the City's best used recreation facilities, and the availability of neighborhood meeting rooms at the High School, Salvation Army, and Aldersly (see Appendix A, page 45). Planned high school recreation improvements, such as a new track, will also benefit the neighborhood.



Montecito-Happy Valley Neighborhood

Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 13. Land Uses in Montecito//Happy Valley, 1950



Montecito-Happy Valley Neighborhood

Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 14. Land Uses in Montecito/Happy Valley, 1995

Guiding Principles and Policies

The guiding principles and policies offer a view of what the neighborhood will be like as viewed from a vantage point in the future. We envision that the following will hold true:

- M/HV-1 Mix of uses.** We like our diverse blend of homes, businesses and services.
- M/HV-2 Not much change.** There has not been much change in existing (1995) uses, although limited additions have improved the appearance and value of our neighborhood.
- M/HV-3 Commercial areas.** Our commercial areas provide a comfortable, inviting mix of retail, office and service uses for our neighborhood and the San Rafael community. Mixed commercial/residential buildings also add to the diversity.
- M/HV-4 Improved recreation.** Neighborhood recreational opportunities and facilities have been created and improved.
- M/HV-5 Redevelopment senior housing development.** An attractive Redevelopment Agency-sponsored senior residential project with amenities as described in program **M/HV-d** has been constructed on the School District's Union Street bus/maintenance yard. The project has met neighborhood goals of improving the look of Union Street, adding recreation facilities and community gathering areas, and minimizing any adverse impacts.

M/HV-6 Overcrowding. A trend towards overcrowding has been reversed.

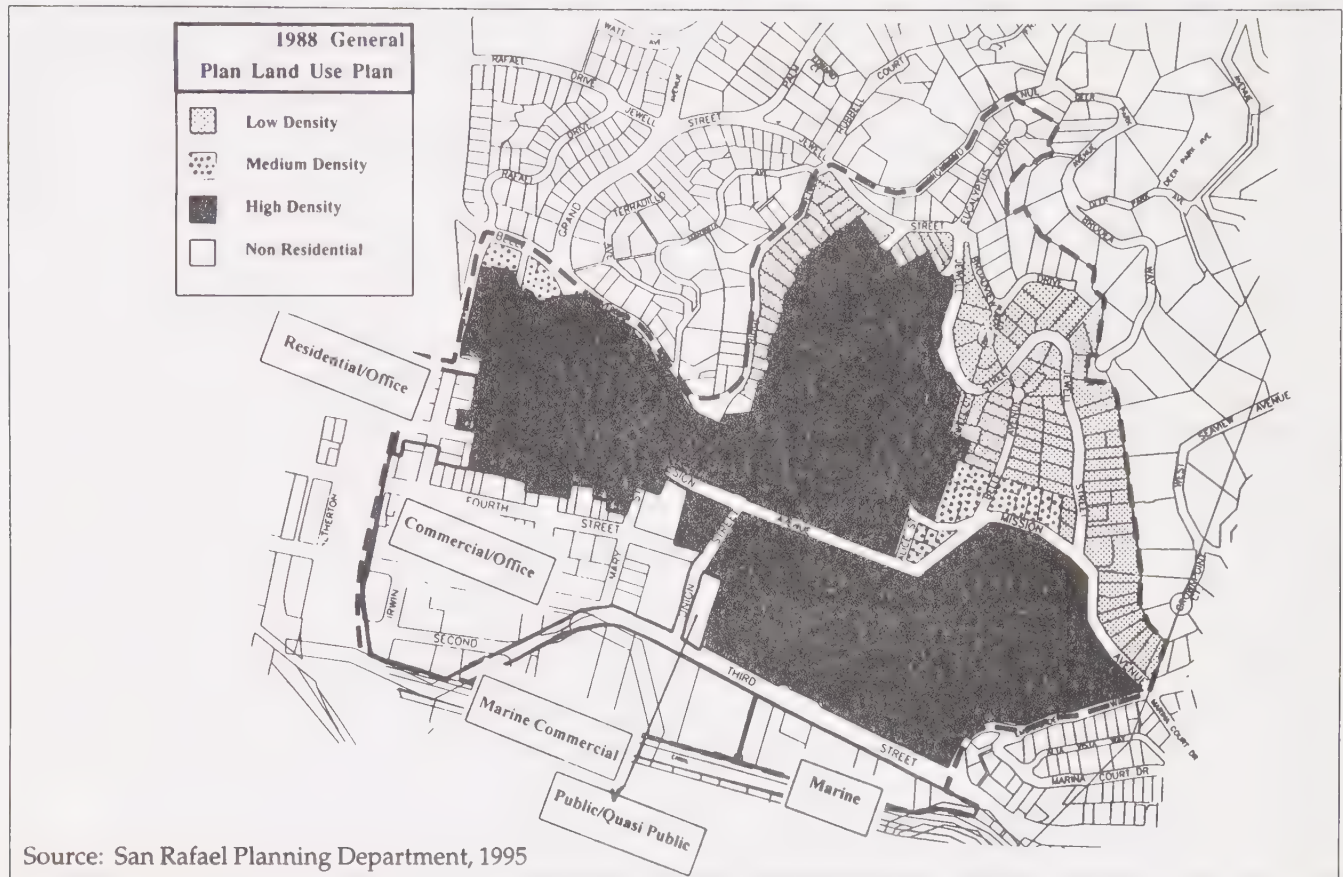
City Actions and Programs

M/HV-a Zoning changes. Implement residential land use and zoning changes, as mapped herein on Figures 17 and 18, to keep the neighborhood much as it is, minimizing additional development in the neighborhood.

Zoning Approach

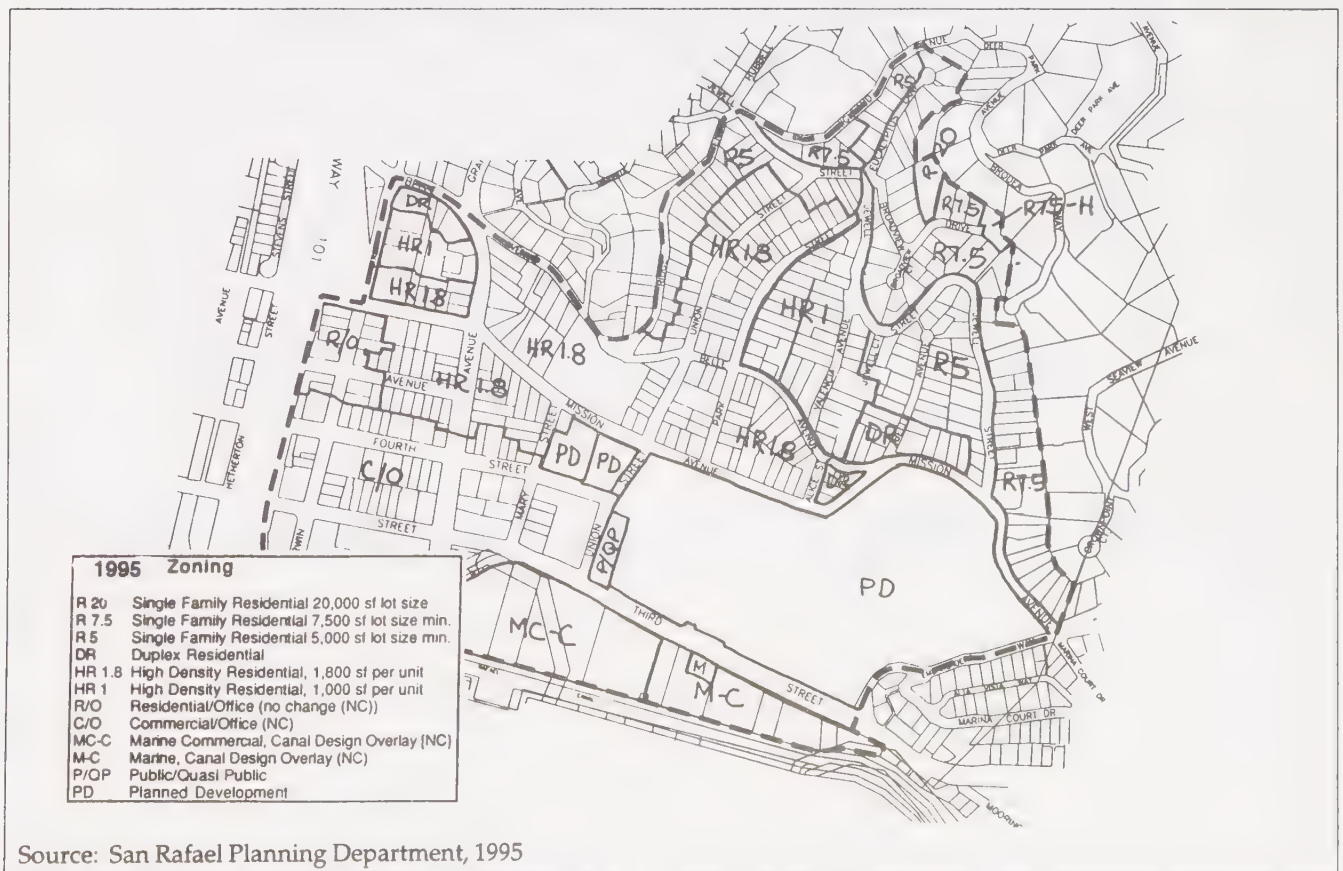
The neighborhood's approach to zoning includes the following:

- ◆ Keeping existing single-family land use categories and zoning districts;
- ◆ Expanding single-family land use and zoning to include adjacent single family properties and groups of single-family homes;
- ◆ Using duplex zoning where there are groups of properties with duplexes on them;
- ◆ Revising most high density designated areas to medium density to better reflect the mix of existing uses, constraints such as parking requirements, and neighborhood direction to minimize change;
- ◆ Where an area is nearly completely developed at high density, keeping the high density land use designation, but reducing high density zoning district to better reflect constraints such as parking and heights and the neighborhood's direction; and
- ◆ Designating the land use for the School District surplus site as high density residential, as further described in the policy and program.



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 15. 1988 General Plan Land Use Plan



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 16. 1995 zoning in Montecito/Happy Valley

Figure 17. Adopted Land Use Plan for Montecito/Happy Valley

Adopted Zoning 1996

R 20	Single Family Residential 20,000 sf lot size
R 7.5	Single Family Residential 7,500 sf lot size min.
R 5	Single Family Residential 5,000 sf lot size min.
DR	Duplex Residential
MR 3	Medium Density Residential, 3,000 sf per unit
MR 2.5	Medium Density Residential, 2,500 sf per unit
HR 1.8	High Density Residential, 1,800 sf per unit
HR 1.5	High Density Residential, 1,500 sf per unit
R/O	Residential/Office (no change (NC))
C/O	Commercial/Office (NC)
MC-C	Marine Commercial, Canal Design Overlay [NC]
M-C	Marine, Canal Design Overlay [NC]
P/QP	Public/Quasi Public
PD	Planned Development



Montecito-Happy Valley Neighborhood

Source: San Rafael Planning Department, March 1996

Figure 18. Adopted Zoning for Montecito/Happy Valley

- M/HV-b Homeownership.** Encourage homeownership through proposed rezoning, and through condominium conversions of existing apartments, to the extent permitted by other City policy.
- M/HV-c Support commercial areas.** Retain existing mixed use land use categories and zoning districts in the commercial areas. Consistent with these districts, encourage active ground floor and retail uses on Fourth Street, and waterfront storefronts and restaurants in the Marine Commercial Zone.
- M/HV-d Redevelop the School District's bus/maintenance yard.** Redevelop the San Rafael City School's bus/maintenance yard with a City Redevelopment Agency-sponsored attractive senior apartment project as generally described in the Agency's letter of July 24, 1995 (Appendix B, page 47) with a maximum of 40 units and adequate parking. The proposal also includes a community room which can be used jointly by neighborhood and project residents, and an outdoor area located and designed to be used jointly by Head Start, the neighborhood and project residents. Consistent with City requirements, the project is subject to design review. It is the neighborhood's desire to have a meeting room which would accommodate a meeting of 20 people, and an outdoor area large enough to accommodate appropriate shared outdoor amenities.
- M/HV-e Other High School Recreation policies.** Support City recreation policies **R-21** and **R-23** which state that if San Rafael High School is ever closed or sold, the City would attempt to secure the continued public use of existing high school recreation facilities, and provide neighborhood park facilities there as part of any community recreation facilities development.

Neighborhood Design and Beautification

Introduction

Neighborhood design and beautification is a broad topic area encompassing not only building design, but also building and property maintenance, graffiti problems, etc. A common thread throughout our beautification discussions is that we need to recognize and build on many of the neighborhood's strong features, such as its older homes and large trees, while also undertaking cleanup and improvement efforts.

Neighborhood design guidelines are one way to protect and enhance existing attractive or historic buildings, and to improve design of other buildings over time, as they remodel. The Plan provides design guidelines which would be administered by the City with our involvement.

Improved code enforcement is as an important way the City can aid neighborhood beautification efforts. There is strong support for added Code Enforcement staff if this becomes feasible in the future. We also recognize that some responsibility to educate residents and provide ongoing cleanup and beautification lies with our neighborhood association.

We have many ideas for neighborhood beautification and cleanup. We're interested in adding street trees to Union Street and others. Landscaping of key sites, such as Head Start and the Fire Station, would add to neighborhood attractiveness, and could be accomplished through neighborhood or joint efforts. We support forming neighborhood groups to work

with owners of poorly maintained properties, eliminate graffiti and hold cleanup days.

Guiding Principles and Policies

The guiding principles and policies offer a view of what the neighborhood will be like as viewed from a vantage point in the future. We envision that the following will hold true:

- M/HV-7 Blend of styles.** Our neighborhood provides a blend of architectural styles; newer buildings are well designed, fit in with our attractive older homes, and provide a "pedestrian friendly" streetfront. In addition, we have retained the character of our historic homes and buildings.
- M/HV-8 Beautiful trees.** We are known for our beautiful trees. Large street trees and other landscaping provide unifying but not uniform features as we walk or drive through our neighborhood.
- M/HV-9 Neighborhood pride.** Our neighborhood is identifiable, attractive and clean. Buildings and landscaping are well-maintained and reflect pride in our community.
- M/HV-10 Fourth Street.** Fourth Street provides a "pedestrian-oriented" walking street connection to Downtown. The Fourth Street view of the High School should be retained and improved.

City Actions and Programs

- M/HV-f Design guidelines.** Utilize the following design guidelines for any new buildings and remodels to be compatible with and retain the character of attractive older buildings, and to provide pedestrian friendly design.
- M/HV-g Streetscape improvements.** When development applications involving new development or substantial remodels are approved, require neighborhood streetscape improvements (such as street trees, landscaping, and sidewalks) and improvements to the pedestrian walkway along the San Rafael Canal waterfront.
- M/HV-h Fire Station.** Encourage screening of the training yard at the Fire Station on Union Street, a major entry street to the neighborhood.
- M/HV-i Street tree maintenance.** Improve City maintenance of street trees, for example, treat elm disease in a timely manner.
- M/HV-j Code enforcement.** Improve enforcement of city codes dealing with trash, weeds, cars in yards, illegal car repair businesses, illegal units, etc. by:
- ◆ Reviewing code enforcement regulations and procedures, and revising them as necessary to assure maximum benefit; and
 - ◆ Adding City code enforcement staff, if feasible.

Montecito/Happy Valley Design Guidelines

(See Appendix C, page 51, for complete guidelines.)

Scale. Use design techniques to provide a more harmonious, integrated scale of buildings.

Building design. Encourage building designs which provide an appearance similar to our older homes on facades facing the street. Provide varied and articulated building facades.

Building heights. Provide building heights similar to those of nearby buildings.

Roof Shapes. Where possible, relate new roof forms to those found in the area, except that additional flat roofs are to be avoided.

Building Entrances. Orient entrances of streetfront units to the street. Design entries to be well-defined and well lighted; encourage usable front porches, verandas or similar features.

Driveways, Parking Areas. Minimize driveway cuts and widths. Encourage recessed or rear yard ground level parking. Where front parking is unavoidable, screen with landscaping to reduce its visual impact on the street.

Windows. Encourage architectural detailing at all window jambs, sills, and heads. Place windows to overlook the street; consider privacy needs in placing rear and side windows.

Gardens. Encourage landscaped, irrigated front entry gardens.

Corner buildings. Design all street facades of corner buildings with consistent materials, and the same care and attention to detail.

Additions to older homes. Ensure that additions are architecturally compatible with the original structure.

Historic/architecturally significant buildings.

Encourage protection and renovation of historic and architecturally significant buildings to retain significant building characteristics. New buildings and major remodels in the vicinity of architecturally significant buildings should respect their scale and design.

Fourth Street Pedestrian Guidelines. Apply Downtown's "Pedestrian-friendly design for Active Pedestrian Commercial Streets" to Fourth Street.

Figure 19. Summary of Design Guidelines

M/HV-k Fourth Street enhancement.
Extend Fourth Street concrete benches/trash can/landscape/elegant sign treatment to east end of Fourth Street.

- ◆ Form a group to encourage property owners to landscape, water street trees, etc.
- ◆ Form a group to work with apartment owners to reduce overcrowding.

Related Neighborhood Actions

- ◆ Create a street tree planting program to add new trees. Priority streets are Union, Park, Mission; other priority sites are Mary Street at Pardini's, the Salvation Army and San Rafael High.
- ◆ Form a "home maintenance assistance group" to help elderly and disabled with property upkeep.
- ◆ Landscape Head Start.
- ◆ Form group to work with property owners to upgrade poorly maintained properties.
- ◆ Hold a neighborhood Cleanup Day.
- ◆ Landscape the Fire Station.
- ◆ Encourage store owners to add more trash cans.
- ◆ Develop a plan for campus-wide improvements at the High School.
- ◆ Hold a landscape workshop.
- ◆ Design and install neighborhood entry signs at locations to be determined.
- ◆ Join the Federation of San Rafael Neighborhood's graffiti clean-up effort.
- ◆ Form a neighborhood graffiti clean-up crew.
- ◆ Sponsor public art in commercial areas.

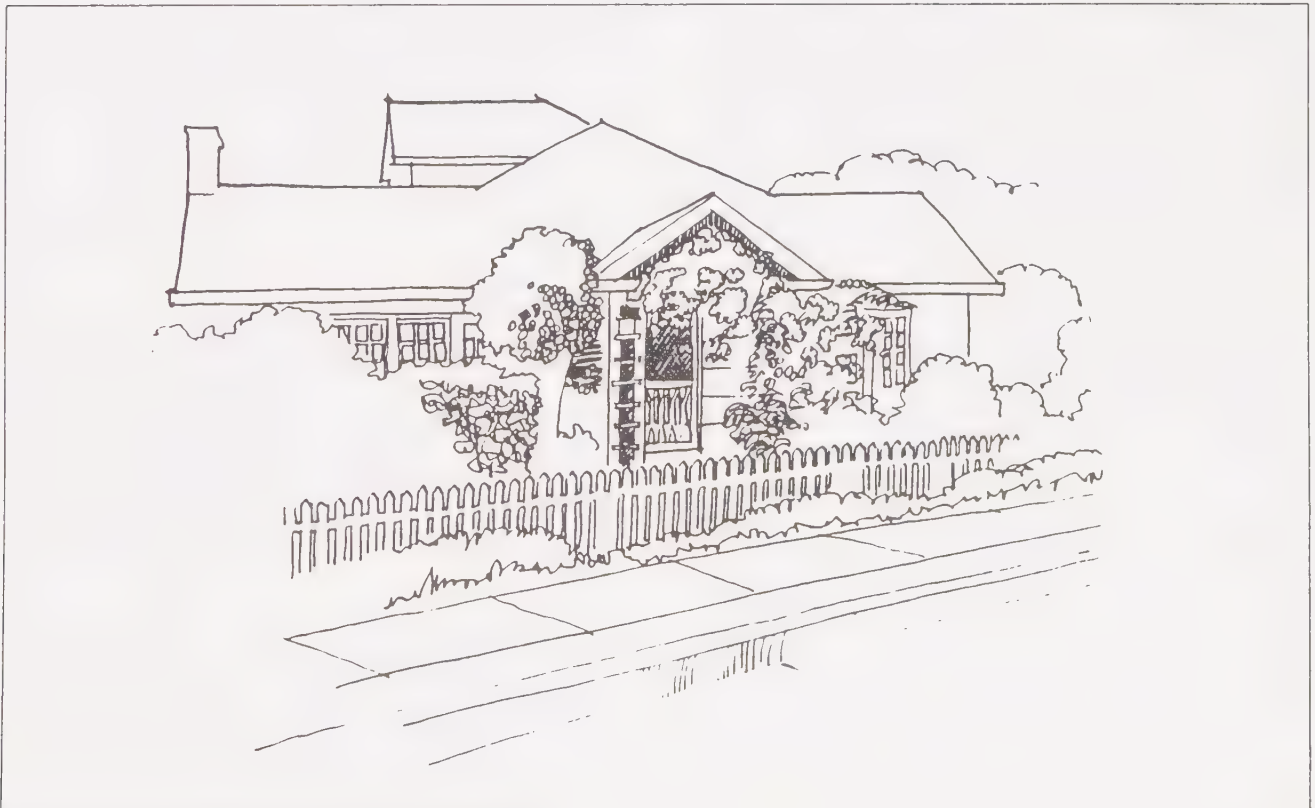


Figure 20. Front gardens beautify the neighborhood.

Safety, Traffic and Parking

Introduction

Neighborhood safety, traffic concerns and parking congestion are high priority issues in Montecito/Happy Valley as all affect the quality of life. We want to feel safe on the street and in our homes, know that our neighborhood is prepared in case of fire or earthquake, reduce traffic hazards and improve our parking.

Currently, most of us enjoy a sense of safety in the neighborhood. We're pleased the Police Department has assigned a Community Police Officer who is familiar with the neighborhood and who serves as a neighborhood contact with the Police Department. Developing a strong Neighborhood Watch program is ranked as a high priority action to ensure that our neighborhood continues to be a safe one. We also identified the "Operation Identification" program, better street lighting, and letting the police know about suspicious behavior as other ways to maintain security. Our efforts to foster a stronger sense of community between neighbors will also help to address problems of petty crime in the neighborhood.

Disaster planning is a concern because of the surrounding hilly topography, the high amount of vegetation and the narrow streets. Fire, earthquakes and hazardous material spills are the types of emergencies which could have a serious impact on our neighborhood. Flooding sometimes occurs in low lying areas.

We learned that a "Fire Management Plan for Country Club" (City of San Rafael Fire Department) prepared in 1994 addresses neighborhood fire safety. In addition, the

Fire Department and Red Cross encourage businesses and households to prepare Disaster Plans and maintain supplies to assure survival for 72 hours. Preparing a neighborhood disaster plan is ranked as a top neighborhood priority.

While some improvement in the drainage infrastructure has been completed, notably improvements at Jewell and Eucalyptus, it must continue. Localized flooding problems (see Figure 29, page 62 and Figure 34, page 71) have in the past affected roadways, homes, and sidewalks, and could again. The City's Capital Improvements Program budgets \$150,000 for drainage improvements on Park Street, though funding is not yet available for this project. We have identified other drainage problem areas which we have submitted to Public Works to assist in preparation of an overall area drainage plan.

The streets in our neighborhood were laid out before cars were the preferred way to get around town. Several streets are narrow and are not necessarily car-efficient. We're concerned about speeding cars; drivers using the neighborhood as a shortcut to Dominican, Highway 101 and Downtown; and cars as a hazard to pedestrians. Nearly all our streets have been identified as having some problems ranging from lack of sidewalks to poor visibility.

We would like to minimize excess traffic in the neighborhood, slow traffic on our residential streets, and improve pedestrian safety and comfort. We've put together a number of traffic improvement ideas to accomplish these goals and have listed preferences.

Figure 21
Neighborhood Ranking of
'Wish List' Traffic Improvements

Ranking	Improvement
1	#1 Safe crosswalks at Union/Belle; Park/Belle; Mission/Union; Mission/Grand
2	#2 Stop signs at Union/Belle; Park/Belle; Mission/Jewell; and other neighborhood streets.
3 (tie vote)	#3 15 MPH speed limit on Jewell (Highland to Mission); Belle; Valencia; Union, and Park
3 (tie vote)	#4 School bus stop relocation from Union at Mission (i.e., to the school bus yard).
4	#5 Left turn lanes on Union at Fourth St. and Pardini's, if there's enough right-of-way.
5	#6 Grand/Mission Intersection Improvements, such as a stop light or left turn lanes.
6 (tie vote)	#7 Pedestrian lights at Hetherton and twin intersections.
6 (tie vote)	#8 Pt. San Pedro Improvements at entrance to High School parking lot
6 (tie vote)	#9 Speed humps on Union, Jewell and Park.
7	#10 Centerline stripes on Union between Belle and Mission; and on Mission from Embarcadero to Belle.
8	#11 Mirrors at blind intersections
9 (tie vote)	#12 Traffic Island or circle, possibly at Mission/Belle; Embarcadero/Mission; Belle/Grand
9 (tie vote)	#13 Alice St. closure, narrowing to twelve feet or other to prevent cars from entering the wrong way.
9 (tie vote)	#14 Purchase portable radar trailer for educational/citation use on City Streets.
10	#15 One-way north on Embarcadero between Marina Ct. and Mission.

We understand not all improvements will prove feasible in terms of engineering, safety and/or costs. We urge the City to fund some needed improvements as reviewed and recommended by San Rafael's Traffic Engineer and Traffic Committee. In addition, we supported on August 16 pursuing an Assessment District to help fund top-ranked traffic improvements which fall outside the criteria for City funding. A Neighborhood Action is included to assist the City in forming an Assessment District.

Parking congestion is one of the most difficult problems in the neighborhood. Because many streets are narrow, on-street parking is limited. In addition, most of the apartment buildings in Montecito/Happy Valley were built when parking standards were lower than today's requirements. Further, students and staff from the High School, commuters using the Transportation Center and employees in the area park on some of our residential streets. Continued towing of abandoned cars, increasing the amount of on-site parking, and parking permit and limited time programs are proposed as ways to improve the situation.

To provide input to City officials, we ranked possible types of improvements for inclusion in San Rafael's capital improvement program. The composite ranking, starting with the most important, were:

1. (tie vote) Drainage improvements
1. (tie vote) Traffic improvements eligible for city funding
2. Street lights
3. Fourth Street Enhancement (further described in the Beautification Section)

Source: August 16, 1995 meeting

We also ranked possible amenity improvements which we understand are not funded by the City. The composite ranking for these improvements was:

1. Sidewalks and paths
2. Traffic improvements of a type for which no City funding is available
3. Curbs and gutters
4. Street Trees
5. High School pickup/dropoff area
6. High School recreation area
7. Neighborhood entry signs
8. Commercial area public parking

Guiding Principles and Policies

The guiding principles and policies offer a view of what the neighborhood will be like as viewed from a vantage point in the future. We envision that the following will hold true:

M/HV-11 Safe neighborhood. People in our neighborhood feel safe and secure from crime, fire and natural disasters.

M/HV-12 Safe streets. Our streets are safe, pleasant, and attractive to drive and walk along.

M/HV-13 Controlled traffic. Our streets have been enhanced and designed to control traffic appropriately.

M/HV-14 Adequate parking. New homes and apartments provide attractive, adequate parking and safe pedestrian access along the street.

M/HV-15 Commercial parking. In the commercial areas, there are well landscaped parking lots which are safe and convenient for pedestrians.

M/HV-16 Street parking. Street parking is convenient, but does not dominate the neighborhood.

City Actions and Programs for Safety

M/HV-l Add Street lights. Using information provided by neighborhood, develop a list of specific areas needing lights, then add street lights.

M/HV-m Police services. Maintain a police presence in areas where there are crime problems; continue to tow abandoned cars; and support improved enforcement of traffic laws regarding stop signs, speeding and parking.

M/HV-n Drainage Plan. Develop a Drainage Plan which identifies problem areas (based on problem areas identified by the neighborhood).

M/HV-o Assessment District. Provide City technical assistance to assist formation of an Assessment District to implement capital improvements of high priority to the neighborhood (see Appendix D, page 59).

Related Neighborhood Actions for Safety

- ◆ Build a strong Neighborhood Watch Program.
- ◆ Prepare a neighborhood disaster plan.
- ◆ Develop a phone list of neighborhood resources.

- ◆ Hold a neighborhood tour of fire hazards.
- ◆ Request free removal of Eucalyptus trees.
- ◆ Have an annual fire safety meeting.
- ◆ Hold a workshop on disaster preparedness.
- ◆ Have a Citizens Police Academy session for the neighborhood.
- ◆ Help families prepare home disaster plans.
- ◆ Work to provide visible numbering and apartment diagrams for fire/police safety.
- ◆ Improve street lighting by trimming trees.

City Actions and Programs for Traffic

M/HV-p Traffic improvements. Pursue implementation of any and all traffic improvements (see Figure 21) which are feasible and for which City funding is available.

M/HV-q Radar trailer. Request occasional use of the County's portable radar trailer sign for educational/citation use on major streets.

M/HV-r Sidewalks and paths. Assist development of a Pedestrian Plan, identifying pedestrian right-of-ways. Using information from the neighborhood, further develop a list of sidewalks and paths for parts of Union, Park, Jewell, Belle, one side of Union; and along the perimeter of the High School.

M/HV-s Pedestrian safety. Add safe crosswalks and striping where needed for pedestrian safety, and posting of speed limits on streets such as Grand, Park and Union.

M/HV-t Curbs and gutters. Assist development of a plan for curbs and gutters on high priority streets, preliminarily identified as being needed on the west side of Valencia and parts of Union and Park Streets.

M/HV-u High School pick up/drop off area. Assist in the design and implementation of an improved pick-up and drop-off area at the San Rafael High gym on Mission.

Related Neighborhood Actions for Traffic

- ◆ Form a committee to work with the City on traffic matters, including identifying and surveying dangerous intersections and highly travelled routes.
- ◆ Pursue implementation of an assessment district to implement high priority neighborhood traffic improvements.
- ◆ Encourage Montecito Shopping Center to hire a security officer to help with traffic flow.
- ◆ Encourage property owners to trim trees away from traffic signs.
- ◆ Start an "I drive 25 in the neighborhood" campaign.

City Actions and Programs for Parking

M/HV-v Improved Montecito parking.

When development applications are approved, encourage better use of the easternmost Montecito parking lot by designing better access from the lot to the shopping center, or requiring employees to park in this lot.

M/HV-w Parking survey. Conduct a parking survey to further evaluate specific parking problems and possible solutions, such as:

- ◆ Working with apartment owners to restore parking spaces being used for storage.
- ◆ Working with property owners to add on-site parking where feasible.
- ◆ Adding "no parking" signs where street clearance is too narrow for emergency vehicles to get through.

M/HV-x Permit parking program. Consider a Permit Parking Program, i.e., to limit cars per unit or to limit non-resident cars.

M/HV-y Time-limited parking. Consider time-limited parking areas west of Union Street.

M/HV-z Public parking. If funding sources can be obtained, develop Commercial Area Public Parking.

Related Neighborhood Actions for Parking

- ◆ Combine resources with the City to develop far-reaching solutions.
- ◆ Encourage high school staff and students to use on-site parking.
- ◆ Encourage more bicycle parking.

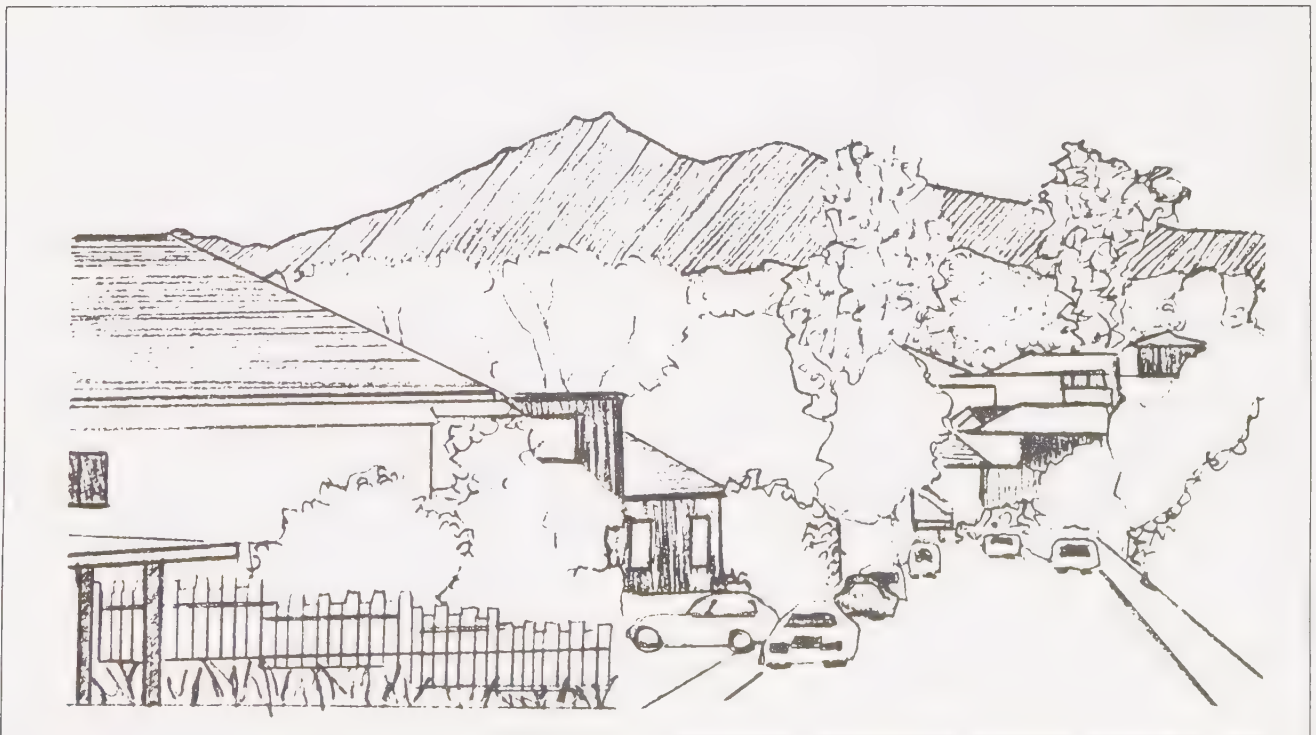


Figure 22. View down Park Street toward Mt. Tamalpais

Community

Introduction

In discussing “community” issues, we quickly came to realize that a key to community improvement is having a strong neighborhood association. There are many reasons why:

- ◆ The association is the organizing center for events, neighborhood projects and ongoing activities. Ultimately the success of projects and activities require the active participation of individuals in the neighborhood.
- ◆ The association has fund-raising capabilities, and the people and other resources to make things happen.
- ◆ The association becomes the primary contact on issues of importance to the neighborhood. Outside agencies and residents know with whom to communicate.
- ◆ The association, through a newsletter and other means, is a main source of information to its members and others.
- ◆ The association includes people and makes them feel part of the community.

We agreed one of the most important outcomes of this neighborhood planning effort is to form a revitalized neighborhood association. This is happening. The Montecito Area Residents Association is under formation with bylaws to be adopted November 11. Committees are being formed to address neighborhood issues.

Our desire to improve neighborhood gathering places is an idea which has resulted in

the Redevelopment Agency’s proposal to share a meeting room and outdoor area with the community on the Union Street bus yard site. (see Redevelopment Agency letter, Appendix B, page 47). We will work to see this accomplished, and we hope to be able to further improve this area into a safe, inviting recreation area. (See Land Use Section.)

We’ve also identified other possible areas which could be improved as informal gathering areas. These include the paved area north of the high school gym by the rock outcrop — which could include play equipment, landscaping and seating; and “triangles” of unused street right of way at Valencia/Jewell, and Ridge/Belle — which could be landscaped and potentially have a seating area.

Guiding Principles and Policies

The guiding principles and policies offer a view of what the neighborhood will be like as viewed from a vantage point in the future. We envision that the following will hold true:

M/HV-17 Working for the greater good.

We work together as a community for the greater good of the neighborhood.

M/HV-18 Respect for all. People of all ages, incomes and cultures feel respected and comfortable in our neighborhood.

M/HV-19 Gathering places. We have neighborhood gathering places where we can meet and hold events.

Related Neighborhood Actions

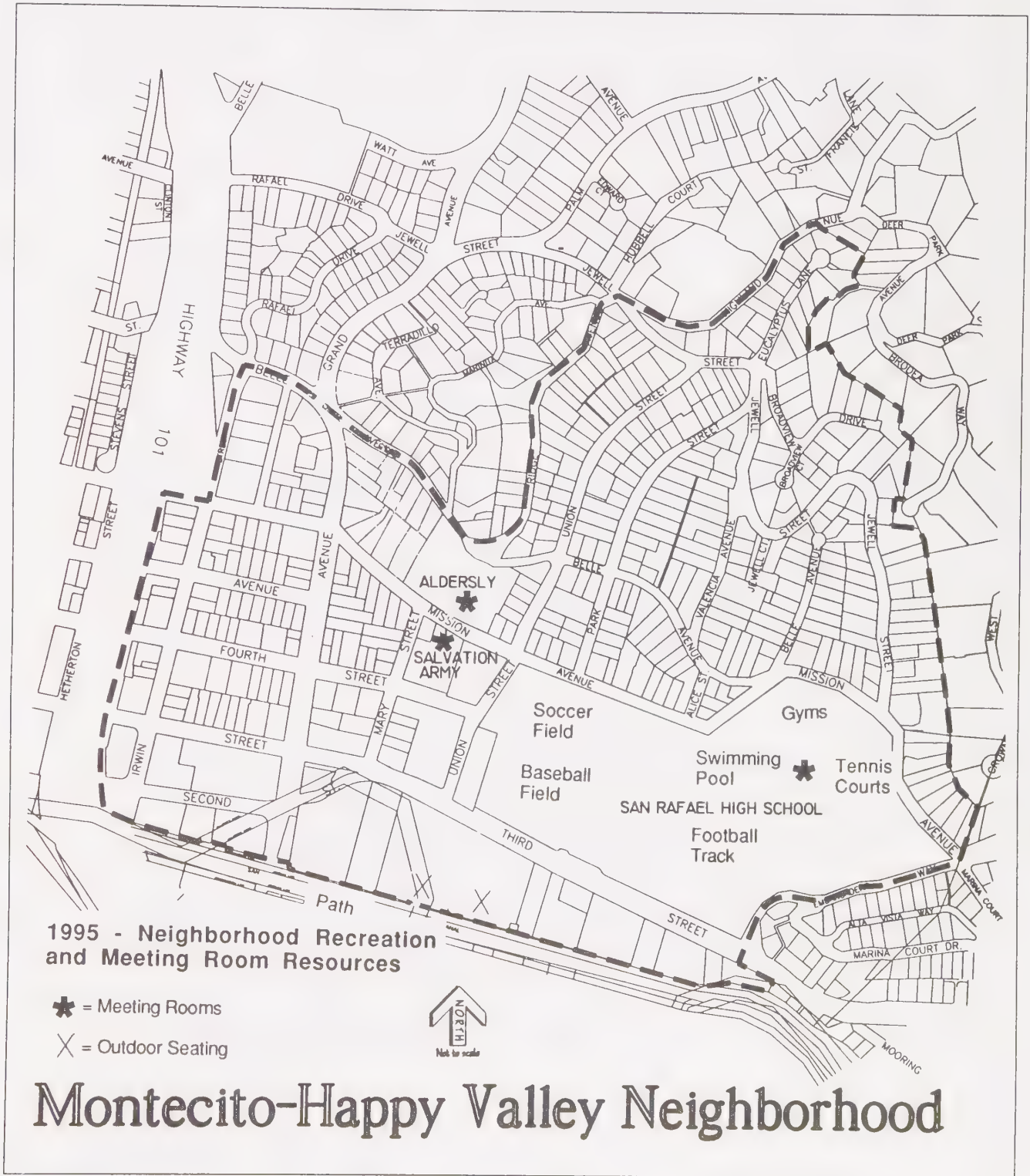
- ◆ Have a strong neighborhood association.
- ◆ Pursue Association-related programs to improve the neighborhood including the following actions related to Community, and others previously mentioned. (See Appendix E, page 67 for our first ranking of neighborhood actions in August, 1995. We expect these rankings will change over time).
- ◆ Hold neighborhood events to get to know each other and work together, such as community gardens, community garage sales, nature and historic walks, community parties, etc.
- ◆ Publish a regular newsletter for residents and businesses, with crime news, information about reporting abandoned cars and graffiti, tips about gardening, events, etc.
- ◆ Explore the use of the high school as a community center offering on-line information from City Hall, ESL classes, etc.
- ◆ Work with the high school about noise issues.
- ◆ Put up an additional high school reader-board publicizing school events and activities.
- ◆ Landscape street right-of-way "triangles" (at Belle/Ridge, and Valencia/Jewell).
- ◆ Landscape, add benches and/or a play area at San Rafael High by the rock outcropping; could tie in to other high school improvements such as added-parking near the swimming pool, and par course renovation.
- ◆ Establish a Montecito area "hotline."



Figure 23. Neighborhood events!

Appendix A

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING ROOMS AND RECREATION FACILITIES



Source: San Rafael Planning Department, 1995

Figure 24. Neighborhood Recreation and Meeting Room Resources.

San Rafael Recreation Programs available to the public at

San Rafael High School

Aquatics

Pool open June 20 - August 27

Mon. - Fri.	11:00 - 1:00	lap swim
	1:00 - 5:00	public swim
	5:00 - 7:00	lap swim (not on Fri.)

Saturday	1:00 - 5:00	public swim
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Admission:	\$2.00	Resident, 12 years and under
	\$3.00	Resident, 13 and over

\$6.00	Nonresident, 12 and under
\$7.00	Nonresident, 13 and over

Swim lessons and classes available

Volleyball

Adult Coed Volleyball League
March through November, Tues. and/or Thurs. nights
Fall signup: August 8, 7:00 p.m. at Gym 1

Tennis

Pee Wee Summer Tennis Camp (5 - 7 years)
Weekly camps, with half hour classes
Youth Summer Tennis Camp (8 - 14 years)
Weekly camps, with one hour classes

Basketball

Fall Adult Basketball League
Play begins week of August 21

Soccer

John Brooks Soccer Camps 1995
One week camps for children 6 - 14 years

Fields/Courts

Track, tennis courts, baseball diamond, basketball courts and soccer field available to the public when not in use for scheduled activities.

Classes

Variety of Mac and PC computer classes offered

Recreation facilities are available for rental by the public.

Call the San Rafael Recreation Dept. at 485-3333 for more information

Figure 25. San Rafael Recreation Programs at the High School

Appendix B



July 24, 1995

Montecito Happy Valley Neighborhood Planning Group
C/O San Rafael Planning Department
City Hall
San Rafael, CA 94901

Members of the Planning Group,

The San Rafael Redevelopment Agency is committed to the development of quality affordable housing for the residents of San Rafael. The School District has declared their maintenance and warehouse site on Union Street to be surplus with the intent of sale. The Agency is interested in purchasing the site for a senior housing project if funds for the purchase are made available through the successful completion of re-issuance of bonds (commonly referred to as Redevelopment III). Because the site is outside the Agency Project Area boundaries, Agency development is limited by law to residential use.

The Agency has funded a major portion of the Montecito Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan development, and has been an active participant in the meetings. The process thus far has made four facts clear to the Agency:

- #1: The Neighborhood has concerns about development in general and this site in particular which must be addressed in a development proposal;
- #2: There are Neighborhood desires and wishes voiced in the planning effort which can be addressed in an Agency housing project;
- #3: Development of this site by the Agency can benefit the School District, the Neighborhood, and the San Rafael community at large;
- #4: Maximum Neighborhood control of the development and future operation of the facility is provided through Agency development because the Redevelopment Agency (City Council) controls the design of the projects and intends to retain an ownership interest in the site.

To be as specific as possible in a situation where the project has not been designed, a sale price not discussed with the property owner, and the property boundary not established, the Agency intent for the site is to:

- **Area** - Purchase approximately 1.5 acres of the site, which would not include the Head Start facility or the existing play fields.

- **Timing** - Construction would occur in approximately 3 to 5 years.
- **Product Type** - Develop approximately 40 senior housing units which would be rented at an affordable (below market) rent rate.
 - ~ Seniors are people 55 years or older, single or married;
 - ~ Rents would be set to be affordable to persons at 80% or less of the median income of the region;
 - ~ A minimum and maximum rent rate would be set - the units are not free;
 - ~ Units would be studios and one bedrooms.
- **Project Appearance**
 - ~ Project would be attractive, with landscaping and setbacks from the street;
 - ~ Building heights would be as low as possible in recognition of the community desire for 1 and 2 story buildings;
 - ~ On site parking areas would be landscaped and screened from view from both Union and Third Streets.
 - ~ The design could include a view down Fourth Street to the front facade of the High School building to re-establish the design concept of the original school layout.
- **Parking**
 - ~ In recognition of the Neighborhood desire that all parking needs be met on the site and that on street parking not be impacted, on site parking consistent with Zoning Ordinance provisions will provided for residents and visitors. The Ordianance requires 0.75 spaces per unit and 1 guest spaces per 5 units.
 - ~ Visitor parking will be marked, and the site manager will require its use.
- **Playarea / passive recreation area**
 - ~ Part of the open area and recreation area for the project will be designed and located to be used jointly by the residents of the Agency project, the Head Start facility and the neighborhood;
 - ~ Access to the recreation area will be regulated by the project manager;
- **Community gathering area**
 - ~ The community room in the project will be primarily used by project residents but will also accommodate small (15 person) neighborhood organization gatherings;
 - ~ Use and access to room will be scheduled through project manager.
- **Management**
 - ~ On site manager is required;

~ The City Council/Redevelopment Agency will retain an interest in the site so that community elected officials can be contacted about the ongoing operation of the facility.

- **Review Process** - The project will be processed through the established City review process which includes review in a neighborhood meeting, evaluation by the Design Review Board, and a Planning Commission public hearing.

I hope this letter explains the type of project which Agency staff intends to pursue. All the Agency has at this time is a concept and an intent; there is no definite project design, no architect and no budget. I must also state that I am addressing the viewpoint of Agency staff and cannot commit the Redevelopment Agency. All official Agency actions relating to this project will be made in noticed public hearings.

The Agency is proud of the housing projects where we have been involved. Any Agency project constructed on this site will be the same high quality as of our other projects. You are invited to visit any of our residential projects, which include:

- San Rafael Commons, senior rentals located across the street from this site;
- Rotary Manor, senior rentals at 1821 Fifth Avenue;
- Boyd Court, condos at the intersection of Mission and B Streets;
- 1H Street, conversion of the old Pacific Telephone building to apartments located at the intersection of Fourth and H Street;
- Centertown, family rentals at the intersection of Third and C Street;
- Marin Center for Independent Living, remodeled handicapped accessible rentals upstairs from 816 Fourth Street.

I look forward to the successful completion of the Montecito Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, and the development of the School District site in a way that benefits the Neighborhood and the rest of San Rafael.

Sincerely,



Jake Ours
Manager, Redevelopment Agency

Appendix C

MONTECITO/HAPPY VALLEY RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following discretionary Montecito/Happy Valley design guidelines are to help new development and major remodels be more compatible with our attractive older homes, and provide a more "pedestrian friendly" streetfront. In addition, they recognize and address the importance of our historic resources.

Our intents are to encourage better designs which emphasize a smaller scale character more consistent with our older homes rather than the large "blocky" apartments which interspersed the neighborhood in the 60's and 70's, and to improve the relationship of new or remodelled buildings to the street.

Our older buildings have front entries, often covered or with porches, facing the street, pitched roofs, and more detailing around windows and doors. By contrast, apartment styles we wish to avoid repeating have flat roofs, entries facing a corridor or parking lot, large monotonous walls, and windows with minimal detail interest. The neighborhood is largely built out. Still, many of the following design techniques are applicable to remodels, and are encouraged, recognizing they may not be possible in all cases.

There is a wide range of "streetscapes" in Montecito as noted in the examples below.

Fifth and Mission west of Grand Avenue

A pleasing appearance with well defined, similar setbacks, homes parallel to streets, similar building scale and spacing: one- to two-stories, single family in appearance with porches, entries to the street, recessed garages, and pitched roofs, and with sidewalks and street trees.

Grand Avenue

Also a pleasing appearance with mostly larger single family homes; pitched roofs, generous setbacks, street trees and sidewalks. "Rhythm", that is, spacing and size of homes along the street is broken by two large, rectangular apartment buildings.

Belle east of Union Street

Many smaller bungalows, varied setbacks, and a few prominent buildings

Union north of Belle Avenue

No defineable pattern: smaller homes, bulky apartments and varied roofs. Parking and wide driveways in front of buildings detract from street appearance.

Park north of Belle Avenue

Street has many smaller one- and two-story buildings as well as rectangular apartments. Pavement in front of some buildings and high fences next to sidewalk detract from street appearance.

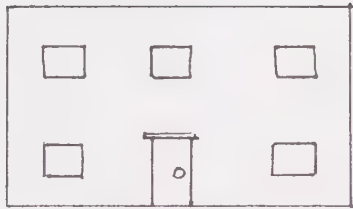
Valencia Avenue

Three-story apartments are a high wall on the uphill side; scale is generally low on the downhill side with some older homes close to the street and other larger apartments set further back. Street is narrow. No sidewalks or street trees.

MONTECITO/HAPPY VALLEY RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES



YES



NO

1. **Scale.** Architectural "scale" means the size of a building relative to the buildings around it. When the buildings in a neighborhood are about the same size and proportion, it is said they are "in scale." When a much larger, bulky building is constructed in this setting, it will overpower the others.

To achieve a more harmonious relationship between the existing mix of larger and smaller buildings in Montecito/Happy Valley and provide a more integrated character, design techniques should be used to break the volume of large buildings into smaller units. For example, an imposing, rectangular building can be vertically divided through architectural features, setbacks and varying rooflines to appear to be more of an aggregation of smaller buildings. Transitional elements, such as stepped facades, roof decks and architectural details will help merge larger buildings into the existing neighborhood.

During remodels of larger apartments, encourage use of vertical divisions to break up their mass, particularly on elevations facing the street.

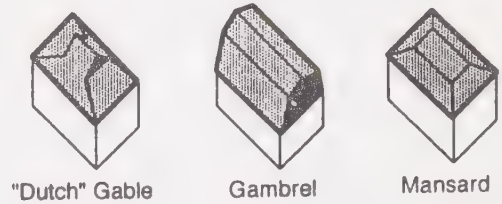
Portions of new construction facing the street should provide similar building proportions to older homes along the street.

2. **Building design.** The intent is to encourage designs which reinforce the smaller scale character of existing older homes.

On front facades facing the street, encourage buildings designs which provide an appearance similar to our older homes – with additional units and parking tucked behind or recessed. All building facades should be varied and articulated; long monotonous walls should be avoided.

3. Building heights. *Dramatic variations in building heights appear chaotic.*

New construction should not vary significantly from the existing average height of nearby buildings. Adjacent buildings should be considered and transitional elements included to avoid overpowering them.



4. Roof Shapes. *A roof is the most important part of any building.*

Where possible, relate new roof forms to those found in the area, except that additional flat roofs are to be avoided. There may be limited instances where a flat roof is appropriate given adjacent buildings.



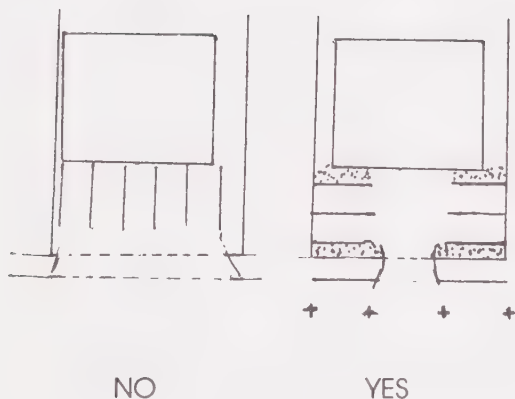
Examples of different roof shapes

5. Building Entrances. *The pedestrian life of a building is at its entry. Entrances which are clearly identifiable and face the street encourage contact between neighbors.*

Entrances of streetfront units should orient to the street rather than to parking lots. Entries should be well-defined and well lighted for users. Usable front porches, verandas, overhead trellis canopies and similar features are also encouraged.

6. Windows. *Windows are the "eyes" of a building.*

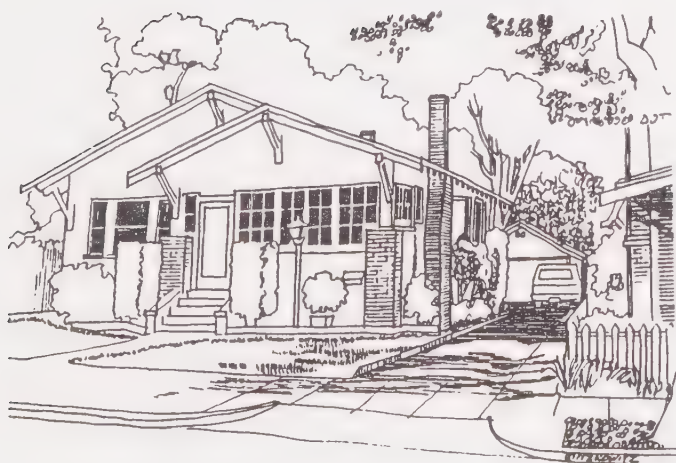
Architectural detailing at all window jambs, sills, and heads is encouraged. Window proportions should be consistent with the proportions of the building and with each other. Windows should overlook the street to permit surveillance of the street. Window placement along rear and side elevations should consider privacy needs of owners and adjacent neighbors.



7. **Driveways, Parking Areas.** *Screening of parking by use of landscaping and by locating parking in less visible locations is important in reducing its visual impact on the street. Pedestrian safety and interest are other major concerns.*

Driveway cuts and widths should be minimized. In new projects or major reconstructions, ground level parking areas should be recessed or placed to the rear of buildings. Where front parking is unavoidable, it should be well screened and landscaped.

← Where front yard parking exists, as in the illustration, consider realignment of parking spaces to be parallel with the street and screened with landscaping.



Recessed garage example

8. **Gardens.** *Landscaping provides life for our neighborhood.*

Even small front yards can be enhanced with shrubs and flowers to contribute to the overall visual quality of the neighborhood. Encourage landscaped, irrigated front entry gardens!

9. **Corner buildings.** *Corner houses are more important in forming the character of streets than any others on the block as they are the most highly visible, and begin and end the block. Design all street facades of corner buildings with compatible materials, care and attention to detail.*

10. **Additions to older homes.** *Ensure that additions are architecturally compatible with the original structure.*

Second story additions should respect the proportions, style and materials of the original house. Quality of materials and detailing shouldn't be crude compared to the original. Proportions of additions should maintain the directional emphasis of the original building. The quality of materials and detailing, and roof pitches and forms of additions should be consistent with the original building.

- 11. Historic/architecturally significant buildings.** Buildings on the San Rafael Historical/Architectural Survey as most recently adopted and shown on Figure 26 are important resources to protect. Where there are substantial changes to the facade, the Cultural Affairs Commission reviews and recommends on the appropriateness of the proposal.

Encourage protection and renovation of historic and architecturally significant buildings to retain significant building characteristics.

New buildings and major remodels in the vicinity of architecturally significant buildings should respect their scale and design.

- 12. Fourth Street Pedestrian Guidelines.** Downtown Design Guidelines for "Pedestrian-friendly design for Active Pedestrian Commercial Streets" should be used for buildings along Fourth Street in Montecito. (see pages 56 - 58.)

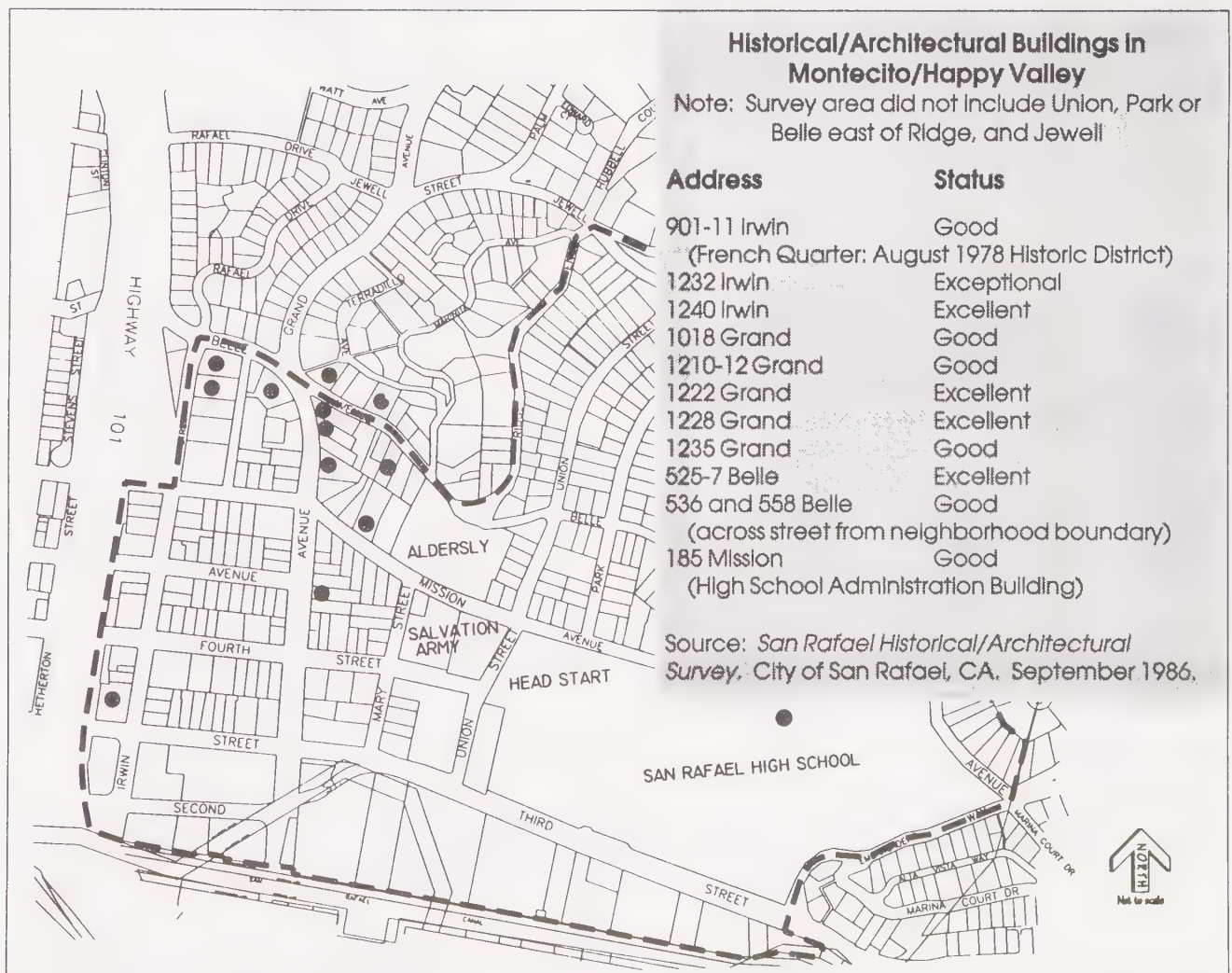


Figure 26. Buildings on City's Historical/Architectural Survey

Downtown Design Guidelines (excerpt) as recommended by the Downtown Advisor Group

Pedestrian-friendly design for the Active Pedestrian Commercial Streets as shown on Map A below.

Fourth Street, and portions of cross streets close to Fourth are active, pedestrian friendly shopping and mixed use areas. The intents here are to enliven these commercial and mixed use areas by encouraging window shopping; by orienting buildings to the street to increase street activity, by including usable, active public plazas, and by minimizing parking lots and driveways which interrupt the pedestrian flow, and by encouraging appropriate signage.

1. **Setback pattern.** Buildings should be located to reinforce the street edge. This means much of the front or street side facades of the ground floors should extend close to the property line. Exceptions to this pattern are encouraged for public plazas or courtyards.
2. **Driveways, Parking Areas.** Pedestrian safety, interest and activity are the primary concerns on these streets. Driveway cuts and widths should be minimized, and ground level parking areas should be placed behind buildings.

3. Building Entrances. *The pedestrian life of a building is at its entry.*

- a. The primary ground floor entrances of non-residential and any residential uses should be oriented to the street—or in some cases public plazas or courtyards—rather than to parking lots.
- b. Ground floor entries should be frequent.
- c. Entries should be well-defined, and well-lighted for pedestrian safety.

4. Windows. *Large storefront windows provide views into the building and a unifying design element.* Large storefront window display areas should be provided at the street level on nonresidential buildings (i.e., approximately 75% clear glass on the primary street level frontage).

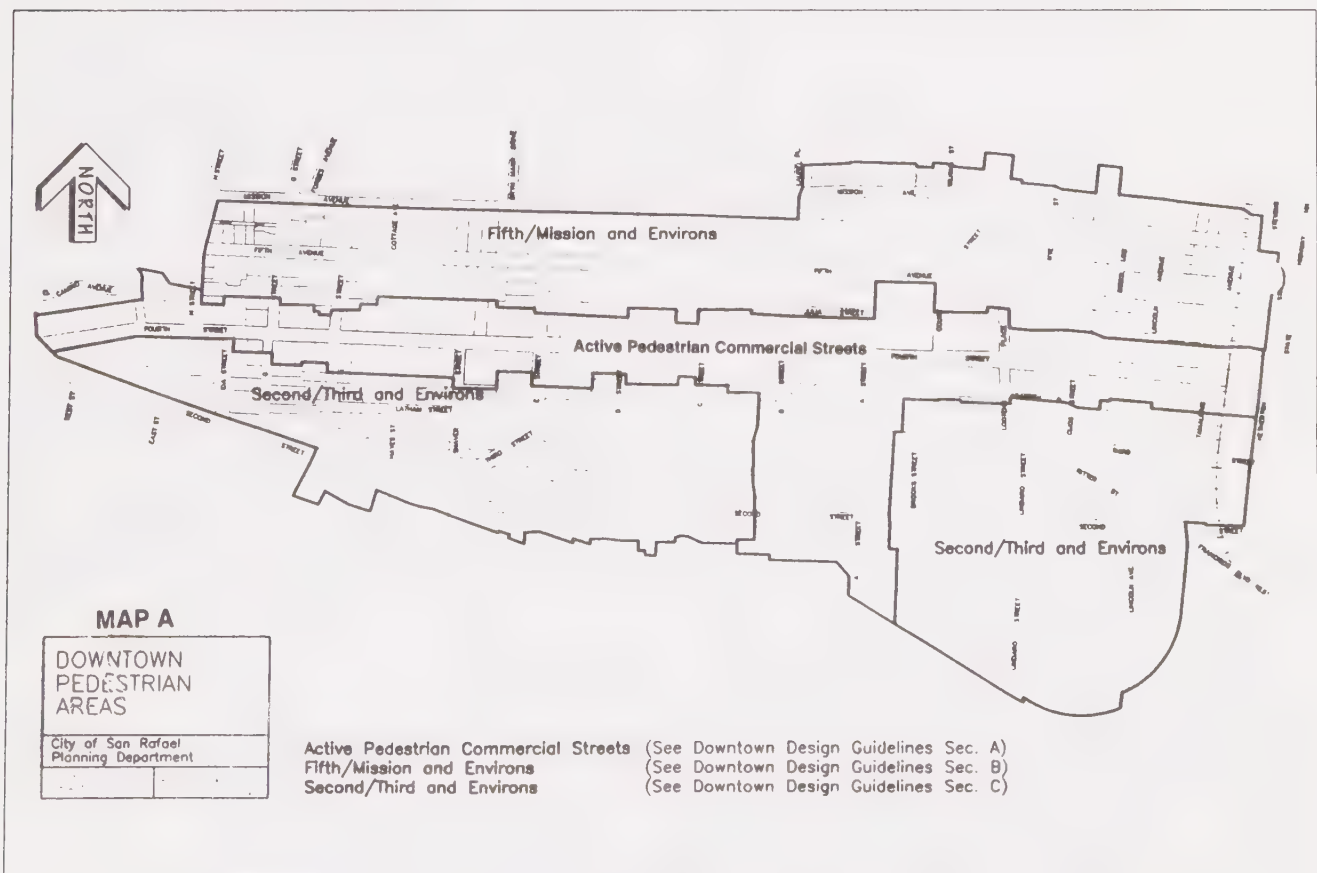


Figure 27. Map A of Downtown Design Guidelines

5. **Building Design.** *Building design should provide interest and variety at the street level, through, for example, awnings, or in limited instances marquees; as well as entries and window displays as noted above. Long, monotonous, uninterrupted walls should be avoided. Differences in facade treatment between ground level and upper levels also add visual interest to a building and are encouraged.*

6. **Public plazas and courtyards.** *Where included in a development, exterior public and semi-public spaces, such as courtyards or plazas, should enhance the surrounding buildings and provide amenities for users. Public spaces should be designed to be used, not just looked at.*

- a. Public spaces are an integral part of the pedestrian system, and should not be separated from the sidewalk with walls or stairs.
- b. Other sides of the public space should provide a sense of enclosure, for example, by defining with buildings, landscaping, street furniture, railings.
- c. The public space should be adequately landscaped and include street furniture.
- d. The public space should be located to take advantage of sun, and shield wind exposure.
- e. Shopping or eating opportunities are encouraged within or adjacent to the public space.

7. **Landscaping.** *Landscaping adds interest. Colorful, small scale plants, including hanging plants are encouraged in small areas along the streetfront for variety and interest. Artificial plants are discouraged.*

8. **Sun.** *Sunny areas are important on Fourth Street for pedestrian comfort and activity. Multi story building design on the south side of Fourth Street should consider step backs or other design techniques to retain sunny sidewalk areas on the north side of the street.*

9. **Awnings.** *Awnings help add color, interest and continuity to a building and provide weather protection. If awnings are used, they are encouraged to:*

- a. Provide colors compatible with the colors of the building and of adjacent buildings.

- b. Provide uniform treatment for multi-tenant buildings.
- c. Provide varied awning designs on a block.
- d. Avoid internally illuminated awnings.

In addition, the following building code standards are included for reference and must be met:

- e. Minimum Height Above Grade:
8 feet; 14 feet at alleys, parking lots or other areas with vehicular traffic
- f. Horizontal Projection:
7 feet, or 66% of the distance between the (from the face of the building) building and curb, whichever is less
- g. Distance to the curb:
2 feet clearance between the awning and curb

10. **Signs.** *Appropriate signage enhances the pedestrian atmosphere and promotes Downtown's image of an active, interesting high quality shopping district and business location. Sign standards are included in the sign ordinance for wall signs, freestanding signs, etc. These additional guidelines promote pedestrian oriented signs not specifically described in the ordinance.*

- a. Signs should be designed to be viewed primarily by pedestrians and persons in vehicles nearby at the street level, not from long distances.
- b. They should be designed as an integral part of the building's architectural design.
- c. Message simplification, including the use of graphic symbols, is encouraged. Lettering should be legible, simple, and appropriate to the image of the building.
- d. Surface brightness or lighting intensity beyond that necessary to attract nearby persons is discouraged.
- e. Projecting signs are encouraged to provide signage oriented to the pedestrian passing on the sidewalk in front of the building.
 - They may project up to 48" from the face of the building, and provide a minimum clearance of 12" between the building face and sign (The sign ordinance

requires that no sign project within 2 feet of the street curb).

- The projecting sign face should generally be no more than 3 square feet in size.
- They should be mounted with at least 8 feet vertical clearance from the sidewalk, and at or below the sill of the second floor window in a multi-story building, or the eave line of a single story building.
- They should provide attractive mounting brackets.
- To avoid visual clutter, they should generally be at least 15' apart.
- Only one face of the sign shall be counted.

f. *Awning signs are often more visible from passing automobiles and from pedestrians from the opposite side of the street and are also encouraged as interesting alternatives to wall signs considering the following criteria:*

- Allowed wall signage may be transferred to ground floor awning faces and sides.
- As with wall signs, lettering must be set in 10% from the edges of the awning.
- Letter height should be limited (generally between 6-12").
- Signage / graphics should not overwhelm the awning: suggested coverage limits: up to 50% of the face area and 50% of awning side areas.
- Signage on the sides of an awning count as one sign only.
- To avoid visual clutter, signs on sides of awnings should generally be provided where there is 15' or more distance between awnings.

g. *Neon signs add liveliness to the retail commercial environment* and are allowed subject to a design review permit.

h. *Addresses assist shoppers.* Street numbers up to 2 sq. ft. in size are (proposed to be) exempt from the sign ordinance.

Appendix D

Possible Neighborhood Improvement Assessment District

Introduction

Montecito/Happy Valley Plan participants have identified a wide variety of improvements for the neighborhood. Sidewalks, traffic, drainage and other physical improvements were all ranked highly at planning meetings. Some projects can be added to San Rafael's Capital Improvement Program to be funded in the future. Many, however, will only be realized through neighborhood support. Typically, this is achieved through an Assessment District. Funding for a project is achieved by assessing each parcel in the district a specified amount of money. The money is used to pay for designated projects, such as a new sidewalk or a park. Neighborhood participants in August, 1995, unanimously endorsed pursuing development of an Assessment District.

On page 61 is an example list of possible improvements for a Montecito/Happy Valley Improvement Assessment District, using the overall priorities established by the neighborhood August 16, 1995.

Not all improvements will prove feasible in terms of engineering or safety. Traffic improvements are subject to approval by San Rafael's Traffic Engineer and Traffic Committee. Cost is also a significant factor. The August 16 poll on the support for an Assessment District to fund top-ranked improvements assumed a \$100 annual assessment per lot for 20 years, with 350 lots participating. Given current interest rates and bond and finance costs, this assessment would finance approximately \$300,000 in improvements of which about 25 percent is estimated to go to engineering, inspections, etc. leaving about \$225,000 for discrete actual improvement costs.

Neighborhood Priorities from August 16 Meeting

Participants were asked to indicate their presences for the following suggested **traffic improvements**. The ranking was as follows:

1. Safe crosswalks at Union/Belle; Park/Belle; Mission/Union; Mission/Grand
2. Stop signs at Union/Belle; Park/Belle; Mission/Jewell; and other neighborhood streets.
3. (tie vote) 15 MPH speed limit on Jewell (Highland to Mission); Belle; Valencia; Union, and Park
(tie vote) School bus stop relocation from Union at Mission (i.e., to the school bus yard).

Assessment District Formation Process

An **assessment district** is a financing system established by State law which enables property owners to fund public improvements. The procedures for setting up an assessment district generally include:

1. Property owners develop a **project proposal** and circulate a petition asking City Council to consider forming an assessment district to fund the project.
2. City Council holds a **Public Hearing** to decide whether to explore forming an assessment district. A "majority protest" (50-60% of the property owners, depending on the district) may stop the project; Council may (but is unlikely to) override the protest by a four-fifths vote.
3. The City contracts with an **engineer and bond counsel** to prepare plans and information on the work to be done, the amount of funds needed, the amount of the assessment being levied, and the details of the bond issue.
4. The City Council holds a second **Public Hearing** on the formation of the assessment district. A "majority protest" may stop the project; Council may override the protest by a four-fifths vote.
5. The **district is formed**, final plans are prepared, the contractor is selected through the bid process, the bonds are issued, the project is constructed, and the property owners pay for the improvements through an annual assessment.

Note: The amount of money assessed each parcel must parallel the relative benefit that the parcel receives from the improvements(s). The revenue cannot be spent for anything other than identified improvements within the assessment district. Landowners are given the opportunity to pay off the assessment at one time, or as a lien against the property with installment payments.

4. Left turn lanes on Union at Fourth St. and Pardini's, if there's enough right-of-way.
5. Grand/Mission intersection improvements, such as a stop light or left turn lanes.
6. (tie vote) Pedestrian lights at Hetherton and Irwin intersections
(tie vote) Improve High School's Pt. San Pedro Road entrance
(tie vote) Speed humps on Union, Jewell and Park.
7. Centerline stripes on Union between Belle and Mission, and Mission from Embarcadero to Belle.
8. Mirrors at blind intersections
9. (tie vote) Traffic island/circle, possibly at Mission/Belle; Embarcadero/Mission; Belle/Grand
(tie vote) Alice St. closure, narrowing to twelve feet or other to prevent cars from entering the wrong way.
(tie vote) Purchase portable radar trailer for educational/citation use on City Streets.
10. One-way north on Embarcadero between Marina Ct. and Mission.

Participants then ranked possible improvements for inclusion in San Rafael's Capital Improvement Program for funding out of the **City's budget**. The composite ranking, starting with the most important, were:

1. (tie vote) Drainage improvements
1. (tie vote) Traffic improvements
- 3.* 15 MPH speed limit on Jewell (Highland to Mission); Belle; Valencia; Union, and Park
4. Left turn lanes on Union at Fourth St. and Pardini's, if there's enough right-of-way.
5. Grand/Mission intersection improvements, such as a stop light or left turn lanes.
6. Pedestrian lights at Irwin and Hetherton.
7. Centerline stripes on Union between Belle and Mission; and on Mission from Embarcadero to Belle.
8. Mirrors at blind intersections
9. Purchase portable radar trailer for educational/citation use on City Streets.
10. One-way north on Embarcadero between Marina Ct. and Mission.
2. Street lights
3. Fourth Street Enhancement
- * Numbers indicates the ranking for the traffic improvement in the listing above.

The groups then ranked possible amenity improvements for which **no City funding** is available. The composite rankings were:

1. Sidewalks and paths
2. Traffic improvements (amenity improvements/

- no city funding available)
3. Curbs and gutters
4. Street Trees
5. High School pickup/dropoff area
6. High School recreation area
7. Neighborhood entry signs
8. Commercial area public parking

From these lists, staff identified the top five **traffic amenity improvements** and the four desired improvements/**no City funding** and which would typically be funded by an Assessment District (see next page).

1. Sidewalks and paths
2. Traffic improvements
1. Safe crosswalks at Union/Belle; Park/Belle; Mission/Union; Mission/Grand
6. (tie vote) Pt. San Pedro improvements at entrance to High School Parking lot
(tie vote) Speed humps on Union, Jewell and Park.
8. Mirrors at blind intersections
9. (tie vote) Traffic island or circle, possibly at Mission/Belle; Embarcadero/Mission; Belle/Grand
(tie vote) Alice St. narrowing to twelve feet or other.
3. Curbs and gutters
4. Street Trees

Other Possible Funding Sources

Several of the suggested improvements might be funded, in whole or in part, by the **School District**. These include the Pt. San Pedro improvements to the entrance to the High School, an improved drop off/pick up area; and curbing and pathway along north side of high school along Mission.

Capital improvements can also be funded from grant resources. For example, **Marin Community Foundation** is a possible source of funds for neighborhood, or joint neighborhood/school district/city, community improvements, such as:

- ◆ Recreation and landscaping improvements at the high school rock outcrop area,
- ◆ Recreation and landscaping improvements at the Agency-sponsored bus yard site,
- ◆ High school swim area or parcourse improvements,
- ◆ High school parking improvements near tennis courts and swim area, and
- ◆ Street tree program.

Community development block grants are a possible source of funding for handicapped ramps, possibly for safe crosswalks.

Example List of Possible Prioritized Improvements for a Neighborhood Improvement Assessment District

NOTE: All costs below are based on initial 1995 estimates by Public Works staff and are for preliminary planning purposes only. For example, costs do not include street reconstruction or repaving which could occur as part of a curb, gutter and/or sidewalk project.

First Priority

Sidewalks and Paths: gap closure (\$16/linear foot est. cost)

Union Street
Park Street
Belle Avenue
Jewell Street

Second Priority

Traffic Improvements

Safe crosswalks: to slow traffic, make it safer to cross the street (\$40,000/intersection)

Mission/Union
Belle/Union
Belle/Park

Improved San Rafael High School Pt. San Pedro entrance: for appearance and ease of use
Wider driveway, better signs (cost depends on improvements; estimated \$10,000)

Third Priority

Curbs and Gutters: improve appearance and drainage (\$16/linear foot)

Union Street
Park Street
Belle
Jewell

Fourth Priority

Street trees: improve appearance (\$200+ each)

Fifth Priority

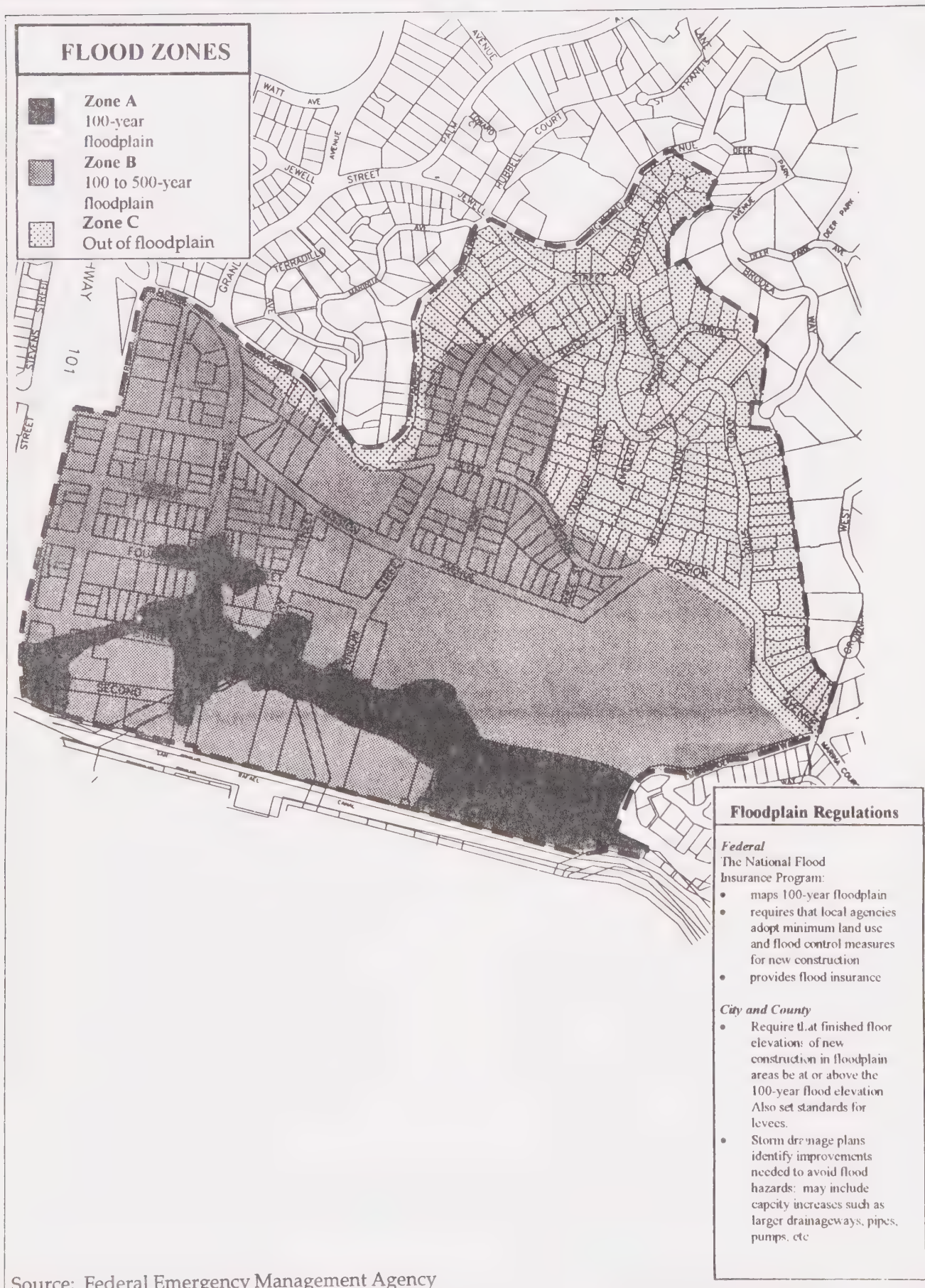
Improved pick-up/drop-off area: safety and appearance (\$30,000 previous High School cost estimate)

Others

High School recreation area: Playground, landscaping, benches (\$80 - 100,000; assumed neighborhood contribution of \$15,000 to a joint City/School District/neighborhood project)

ESTIMATED ASSESSMENT DISTRICT TOTAL: \$260,600 + trees

Figure 28. Example list of possible assessment district improvements



Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency

Figure 29. Flood Zones

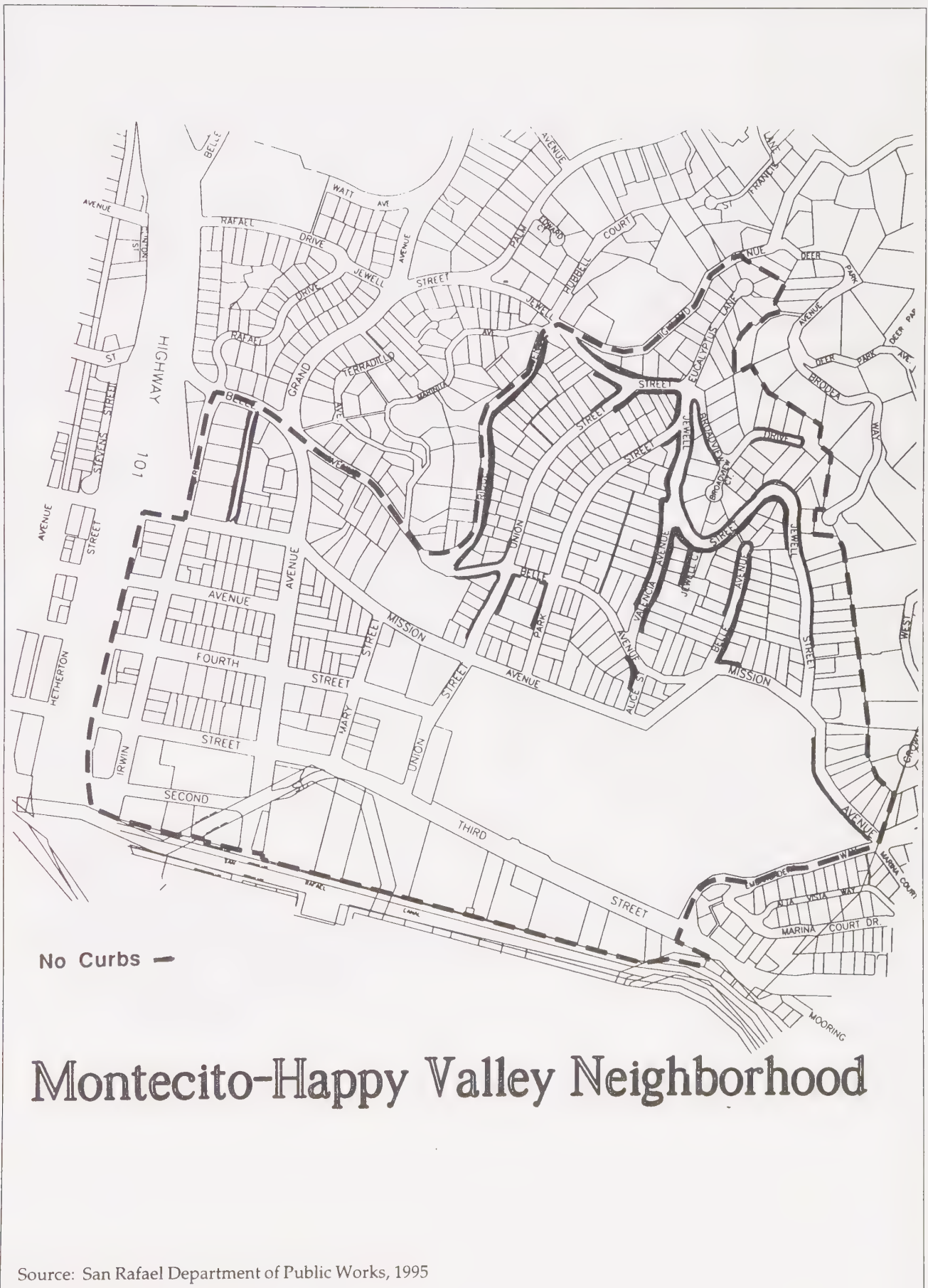


Figure 30. Areas with no curbing



Montecito-Happy Valley Neighborhood

Source: San Rafael Department of Public Works, 1995

Figure 31. Areas with no sidewalks



Montecito-Happy Valley Neighborhood

Source: San Rafael Department of Public Works, 1995

Figure 32. Curbs and sidewalks included in the Assessment District

Appendix E

MONTECITO/HAPPY VALLEY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

At the August 16th neighborhood planning meeting, forty actions were listed as possible neighborhood association activities. They were ranked as follows:

1. **(18 votes)** Have a strong neighborhood association
2. **(14 votes)** Build a strong Neighborhood Watch Program
3. **(12 votes)** Hold neighborhood events
 Prepare a disaster plan
4. **(10 votes)** Create a street tree planting program
 Form a 'home maintenance assistance group' to help elderly and disabled with property upkeep.
5. **(9 votes)** Landscape Head Start
 Form group to work with property owners to upgrade poorly-maintained properties.
 Hold a Neighborhood Cleanup Day
6. **(8 votes)** Publish a newsletter *(also received 3 "don't pursue" votes)*
 Explore the use of the High School as a community center.
7. **(7 votes)** Landscape street right-of-way triangles
 Encourage property owners to trim trees away from traffic signs
8. **(6 votes)** Form a group to encourage property owners to landscape
 Form a group to work with apartment owners to reduce overcrowding
 Encourage Montecito Shopping Center to hire a security officer to help with traffic flow *(also received 1 "don't pursue" vote)*
9. **(5 votes)** Pursue grant or donations for a park near High School rock outcropping
 Landscape the Fire Station.
 Develop of phone list of neighborhood resources.
 Hold a neighborhood tour of fire hazards.
 Request free removal of Eucalyptus trees *(also received 1 "don't pursue" vote)*
 Encourage High School staff and students to use on-site parking.
 Start a "I drive 25 in the neighborhood" campaign

Encourage more bicycle parking.

10. (4 votes) Encourage business owners to add more trash cans.

Have an annual fire safety meeting.

Work with the High School about noise issues.

Develop a plan for campus-wide improvements at the High School.

Put up an additional High School readerboard *(also received 1 "don't pursue" vote)*

11. (3 votes) Hold a landscape workshop.

Install neighborhood entry signs *(also received 1 "don't pursue" vote)*

Join Federation's graffiti clean-up crew

Form neighborhood graffiti clean-up crew

Hold a workshop on disaster preparedness

Have a Citizen's Academy session for the neighborhood.

12. (2 votes) Sponsor public art in commercial areas *(also received 4 "don't pursue" votes)*

Help families prepare home disaster plans.

Work to provide visible numbering and apartment diagrams for fire/police safety.

Improve street lighting by trimming trees.

[N-28, to assist homeowners with roof cleaning work parties, did not receive any votes.]

Appendix F

Summary Maps of Problem Areas and Needs

Figure 33	Notes on Beautification and Design from April 29 and May 24 Meetings
Figure 34	Notes on Drainage Problems from April 29 and May 24 Meetings
Figure 35	Notes on Needed Sidewalks from April 29 and May 24 Meetings
Figure 36	Notes on Other Safety Concerns from April 29 and May 24 Meetings
Figure 37	Notes on Traffic Concerns from April 29, May 24 and July 5 Meetings
Figure 38	Notes on Parking Problems from April 29, May 24 and July 5 Meeting



Figure 33. Notes about beautification and design from April 29 and May 24 neighborhood meetings



Figure 34. Notes about needed drainage improvements from April 29 and May 24 neighborhood meetings



Figure 35. Notes about needed sidewalks/paths and curbs/gutters from April 29 and May 24 neighborhood meetings



Figure 36. Notes about safety concerns from April 29 and May 5 neighborhood meetings



Figure 37. Notes about traffic concerns from April 29, May 24, and July 5 neighborhood meetings



Figure 38. Notes about parking problems from April 29, May 24, and July 5 neighborhood meetings

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



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